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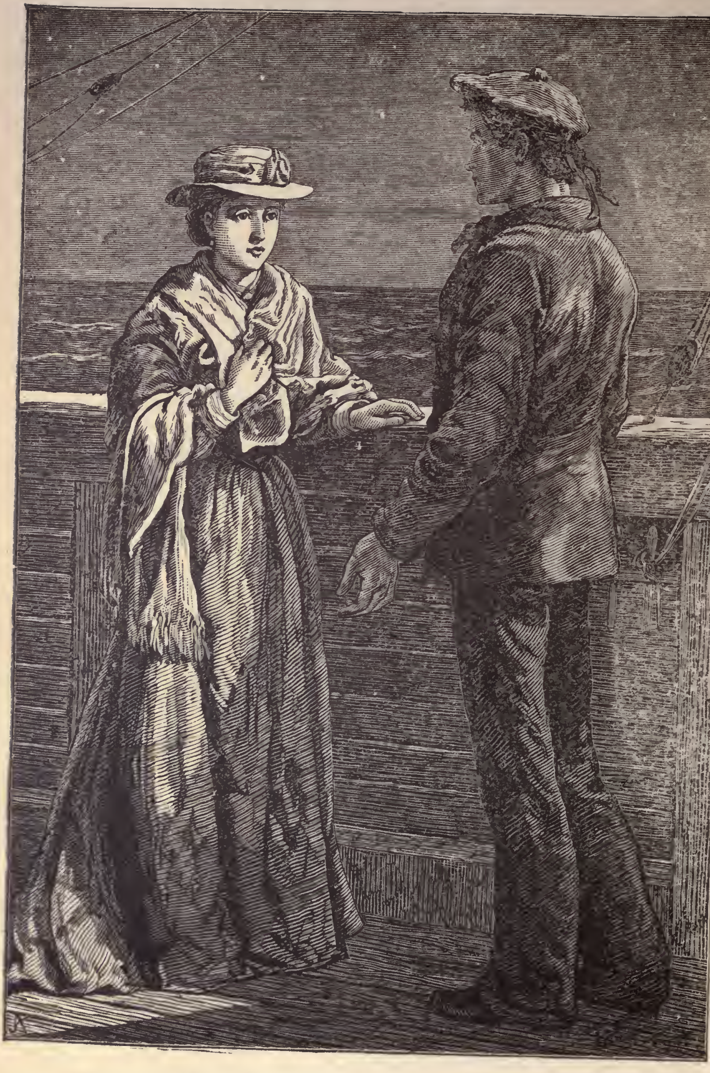

"'I am your brother,' Malcolm repeated."

P. 268.

# THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE

BY

GEORGE MACDONALD, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "DAVID ELGINBROD," "ROBERT FALCONER," "ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN," "ANNALS OF A QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD," ETC., ETC.

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# THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE STABLE-YARD.

It was one of those exquisite days that come in every winter, in which it seems no longer the dead body, but the lovely ghost of summer. Such a day bears to its sister of the happier time something of the relation the marble statue bears to the living form; the sense it awakes of beauty is more abstract, more ethereal; it lifts the soul into a higher region than will summer day of lordliest splendour. It is like the love that loss has purified.

Such, however, were not the thoughts that at the moment occupied the mind of Malcolm Colonsay. Indeed, the loveliness of the morning was but partially visible from the spot where he stood—the stable-yard of Lossie House, ancient and roughly paved. It was a hundred years since the stones had been last relaid and levelled: none of the horses of the late Marquis minded it but one—her whom the young man in Highland dress was now grooming—and she would have fidgeted had it been an oak floor. The yard was a long and wide space, with two storied buildings on all sides of it. In the centre of one of them rose the clock, and the morning sun shone red on its tarnished gold. It was an ancient clock, but still capable of keeping good time—good enough, at least, for all the requirements of the house, even when the family was at home, seeing it never stopped, and the church clock was always ordered by it.

It not only set the time, but seemed also to set the fashion of the place, for the whole aspect of it was one of wholesome, weather-beaten, time-worn existence. One of the good things that accompany good blood is that its possessor does not much mind a shabby coat. Tarnish and lichens and water-wearing, a wavy house-ridge, and a few families of worms in the wainscot do not annoy the marquis as they do the city man who has just bought a little place in the country. When an old family ceases to go lovingly with nature, I see no reason why it should go any longer. An old tree is venerable, and an old picture precious to the soul, but an old house, on which has been laid none but loving and respectful hands, is dear to the very heart. Even an old barn door, with the carved initials of hinds and maidens of vanished centuries, has a place of honour in the cabinet of the poet's brain. It was centuries since Lossie House had begun to grow shabby—and beautiful; and he to whom it now belonged was not one to discard the reverend for the neat, or let the vanity of possession interfere with the grandeur of inheritance.

Beneath the tarnished gold of the clock, flushed with the red winter sun, he was at this moment grooming the coat of a powerful black mare. That he had not been brought up a groom was pretty evident from the fact that he was not hissing; but that he was Marquis of Lossie there was nothing about him to show. The mare looked dangerous. Every now and then she cast back a white glance of the one visible eye. But the youth was on his guard, and as wary as fearless in his handling of her. When at length he had finished the toilet which her restlessness—for her four feet were never all still at once upon the stones—had considerably protracted, he took from his pocket a lump of sugar, and held it for her to bite at with her angry-looking teeth.

It was a keen frost, but in the sun the icicles had begun to drop. The roofs in the shadow were covered with hoar frost; wherever there was shadow there was whiteness. But for all the cold, there was keen life in the air, and yet keener life in the two animals, biped and quadruped.

As they thus stood, the one trying to sweeten the other's relation to himself, if he could not hope much for her general temper, a man, who looked half farmer, half lawyer, appeared on the opposite side of the court in the shadow.

"You are spoiling that mare, MacPhail," he cried.

"I canna weel du that, sir; she canna be muckle waur," said the youth.

"It's whip and spur she wants, not sugar."

"She has had, and sall hae baith, time aboot *(in turn)*; and I houp they'll du something for her in time, sir."

"Her time shall be short here, anyhow. She's not worth the sugar you give her."

"Eh, sir! luik at her," said Malcolm, in a tone of expostulation, as he stepped back a few paces and regarded her with admiring eyes. "Saw ye ever sic legs? an' sic a neck? an' sic a heid? an' sic fore an' hin' quarters? She's a' bonny but the temper o' her, an' that she canna help like the likes o' you an' me."

"She'll be the death o' somebody some day. The sooner we get rid of her the better. Just look at that," he added, as the mare laid back her ears and made a vicious snap at nothing in particular.

"She was a favourite o' my—maister, the marquis," returned the youth, "an' I wad ill like to pairt wi' her."

"I'll take any offer in reason for her," said the factor. "You'll just ride her to Forres market next week, and see what you can get for her. I do think she's quieter since you took her in hand."

"I'm sure she is—but it winna laist a day. The moment I lea' her, she'll be as ill's ever," said the youth. "She has a kin' o' a likin' to me, 'cause I gi'e her sugar, an' she canna cast me; but she's no a bit better i' the hert o' her yet. She's an oonsanctifeed brute. I cudna think o' sellin' her like this."

"Lat them 'at buys tak' tent *(beware)*," said the factor.

"Ow ay! lat them; I dinna objec'; gien only they ken what she's like afore they buy her," rejoined Malcolm.

The factor burst out laughing. To his judgment the youth had spoken like an idiot.

"We'll not send you to sell," he said. "Stoat shall go with you, and you shall have nothing to do but hold the mare and your own tongue."

"Sir," said Malcolm, seriously, "ye dinna mean what ye say? Ye said yersel' she wad be the deith o' somebody, an' to sell her ohn tell't what she's like wad be to caw the saxt comman'ment clean to shivers."

"That may be good doctrine i' the kirk, my lad, but it's pure heresy i' the horse-market. No, no! You buy a horse as you take a wife—for better for worse, as the case may be. A woman's not bound to tell her faults when a man wants to marry her. If she keeps off the worst of them afterwards, it's all he has a right to look for."

"Hoot, sir! there's no a pair o' parallel lines in a' the compairison," returned Malcolm. "Mistress Kelpie here 's e'en ower ready to confess her fauts, an' that by giein' a taste o' them; she winna bide to be speired; but for haudin' aff o' them efter the bargain's made—ye ken she's no even responsible for the bargain. An' gien ye expec' me to haud my tongue aboot them—faith, Maister Crathie, I wad as sune think o' sellin' a rotten boat to Blue Peter. Gien the man 'at has her to see till, dinna ken to luik oot for a storm o' iron shune or lang teeth ony moment, his wife may be a widow that same market nicht. An' forbye, it's again' the aucht comman'ment as weel's the saxt. There's nae exception there in regaird o' horse flesh. We maun be honest i' that as weel's i' corn or herrin', or onything ither 'at 's coft an' sell't atween man an' his neibor."

"There's one commandment, my lad," said Mr Crathie, with the dignity of intended rebuke, "you seem to find hard to learn, and that is, to mind your own business."

"Gien ye mean catchin' the herrin', maybe ye're richt," said the youth. "I ken mair aboot that nor the horse-coupin', and it's full cleaner."

"None of your impudence!" returned the factor. "The marquis is not here to uphold you in your follies. That they amused him is no reason why I should put up with them. So keep your tongue between your teeth, or you'll find it the worse for you."

The youth smiled a little oddly, and held his peace.

"You're here to do what I tell you, and make no remarks," added the factor.

"I'm awaur o' that, sir—within certain leemits," returned Malcolm.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean within the leemits o' duin' by yer neibor as ye wad ha'e yer neibor du by you—that's what I mean, sir."

"I've told you already that doesn't apply in horse-dealing. Every man has to take care of himself in the horse-market: that's understood. If you had been brought up amongst horses instead of herring, you would have known that as well as any other man."

"I doobt I'll ha'e to gang back to the herrin' than, sir, for they're like to pruv' the honester o' the twa. But there's nae hypocrisy in Kelpie, an' she maun ha'e her day's denner, come o' the morn's what may."

At the word *hypocrisy*, Mr Crathie's face grew red as the sun in a fog. He was an elder of the kirk, and had family worship every night as regularly as his toddy. So the word was as offensive and insolent as it was foolish and inapplicable. He would have turned Malcolm adrift on the spot, but that he remembered—not the favour of the late marquis for the lad—that was nothing to the factor now: his lord under the mould was to him as if he had never been above it—but the favour of the present marchioness, for all in the house knew that she was interested in him. Choking down therefore his rage and indignation, he said sternly:

"Malcolm, you have two enemies—a long tongue, and a strong conceit. You have little enough to be proud of, my man, and the less said the better. I advise you to mind what you're about, and show suitable respect to your superiors, or as sure as judgment you'll go back to fish-guts."

While he spoke, Malcolm had been smoothing Kelpie all over with his palms; the moment the factor ceased talking, he ceased stroking, and with one arm thrown over the mare's back, looked him full in the face.

"Gien ye imaigine, Maister Crathie," he said, "'at I coont it ony rise i' the warl' 'at brings me un'er the orders o' man less honest than he micht be, ye're mista'en. I dinna think it's pride this time; I wad ile Blue Peter's lang butes till him, but I winna lee for ony factor atween this an' Davy Jones."

It was too much. Mr Crathie's feelings overcame him, and he was a wrathful man to see, as he strode up to the youth with clenched fist.

"Haud frae the mere, for God's sake, Maister Crathie," cried Malcolm.

But even as he spoke, two reversed Moorish arches of gleaming iron opened on the terror-quickened imagination of the factor a threatened descent from which his most potent instinct, that of self-preservation, shrank in horror. He started back white with dismay, having by a bare inch of space and a bare moment of time, escaped what he called Eternity. Dazed with fear he turned and had staggered half-way across the yard, as if going home, before he recovered himself. Then he turned again, and with what dignity he could scrape together said—

"MacPhail, you go about your business."

In his foolish heart he believed Malcolm had made the brute strike out.

"I canna weel gang till Stoat comes hame," answered Malcolm.

"If I see you about the place after sunset, I'll horsewhip you," said the factor, and walked away, showing the crown of his hat.

Malcolm again smiled oddly, but made no reply. He undid the mare's halter, and took her into the stable. There he fed her, standing by her all the time she ate, and not once taking his eyes off her. His father, the late marquis, had bought her at the sale of the stud of a neighbouring laird, whose whole being had been devoted to horses, till the pale one came to fetch himself: the men about the stable had drugged her, and, taken with the splendid lines of the animal, nor seeing cause to doubt her temper as she quietly obeyed the halter, he had bid for her, and, as he thought, had her a great bargain. The accident that finally caused his death followed immediately after, and while he was ill no one cared to vex him by saying what she had turned out. But Malcolm had even then taken her in hand in the hope of taming her a little before his master, who often spoke of his latest purchase, should see her again. In this he had very partially succeeded; but if only for the sake of him whom he now knew for his father, nothing would have made him part with the animal. Besides, he had been compelled to use her with so much severity at times that he had grown attached to her from the reaction of pity as well as from admiration of her physical qualities, and the habitude of ministering to her wants and comforts. The factor, who knew Malcolm only as a servant, had afterwards allowed her to remain in his charge, merely in the hope, through his treatment, of by-and-by selling her, as she had been bought, for a faultless animal, but at a far better price.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LIBRARY.

When she had finished her oats, Malcolm left her busy with her hay, for she was a huge eater, and went into the house, passing through the kitchen and ascending a spiral stone stair to the library—the only room not now dismantled. As he went along the narrow passage on the second floor leading to it from the head of the stair, the housekeeper, Mrs Courthope, peeped after him from one of the many bedrooms opening upon it, and watched him as he went, nodding her head two or three times with decision: he reminded her so strongly—not of his father, the last marquis, but the brother who had preceded him, that she felt all but certain, whoever might be his mother, he had as much of the Colonsay blood in his veins as any marquis of them all. It was in consideration of this likeness that Mr Crathie had permitted the youth, when his services were not required, to read in the library.

Malcolm went straight to a certain corner, and from amongst a dingy set of old classics took down a small Greek book, in large type. It was the manual of that slave among slaves, that noble among the free, Epictetus. He was no great Greek scholar, but, with the help of the Latin translation, and the gloss of his own rath experience, he could lay hold of the mind of that slave of a slave, whose very slavery was his slave to carry him to the heights of freedom. It was not Greek he cared for, but Epictetus. It was but little he read, however, for the occurrence of the morning demanded, compelled thought. Mr Crathie's behaviour caused him neither anger nor uneasiness, but it rendered necessary some decision with regard to the ordering of his future.

I can hardly say he recalled how, on his death-bed, the late marquis, about three months before, having, with all needful observances, acknowledged him his son, had committed to his trust the welfare of his sister; for the memory of this charge was never absent from his feeling even when not immediately present to his thought. But although a charge which he would have taken upon him all the same had his father not committed it to him, it was none the less a source of perplexity upon which as yet all his thinking had let in but little light. For to appear as Marquis of Lossie was not merely to take from his sister the title she supposed her own, but to declare her illegitimate, seeing that, unknown to the marquis, the youth's mother, his first wife, was still alive when Florimel was born. How to act so that as little evil as possible might befall the favourite of his father, and one whom he had himself loved with the devotion almost of a dog, before he knew she was his sister, was the main problem.

For himself, he had had a rough education, and had enjoyed it: his thoughts were not troubled about his own prospects. Mysteriously committed to the care of a poor blind Highland piper, a stranger from inland regions, settled amongst a fishing people, he had, as he grew up, naturally fallen into their ways of life and labour, and but lately abandoned the calling of a fisherman to take charge of the marquis's yacht, whence, by degrees, he had, in his helpfulness, grown indispensable to him and his daughter, and had come to live in the house of Lossie as a privileged servant. His book education, which he owed mainly to the friendship of the parish schoolmaster, although nothing marvellous, or in Scotland very peculiar, had opened for him in all directions doors of thought and inquiry, but the desire of knowledge was in his case, again through the influences of Mr Graham, subservient to an almost restless yearning after the truth of things, a passion so rare that the ordinary mind can hardly master even the fact of its existence.

The Marchioness of Lossie, as she was now called, for the family was one of the two or three in Scotland in which the title descends to an heiress, had left Lossie House almost immediately upon her father's death, under the guardianship of a certain dowager countess. Lady Bellair had taken her first to Edinburgh, and then to London. Tidings of her Malcolm occasionally received through Mr Soutar of Duff Harbour, the lawyer the marquis had employed to draw up the papers substantiating the youth's claim. The last amounted to this, that, as rapidly as the proprieties of mourning would permit, she was circling the vortex of the London season; and Malcolm was now almost in despair of ever being of the least service to her as a brother to whom as a servant he had seemed at one time of daily necessity. If he might but once be her skipper, her groom, her attendant, he might then at least learn how to discover to her the bond between them, without breaking it in the very act, and so ruining the hope of service to follow.

## CHAPTER III.

### MISS HORN.

The door opened, and in walked a tall, gaunt, hard-featured woman, in a huge bonnet, trimmed with black ribbons, and a long black net veil, worked over with sprigs, coming down almost to her waist. She looked stern, determined, almost fierce, shook hands with a sort of loose dissatisfaction, and dropped into one of the easy chairs in which the library abounded. With the act the question seemed shot from her—

"Duv ye ca' yersel' an honest man, noo, Ma'colm?"

"I ca' myself naething," answered the youth; "but I wad fain be what ye say, Miss Horn."

"Ow! I dinna doobt ye wadna steal, nor yet tell lees aboot a horse: I ha'e jist come frae a sair waggin' o' tongues about ye. Mistress Crathie tells me her man's in a sair vex 'at ye winna tell a wordless lee aboot the black mere: that's what I ca't—no her. But lee it wad be, an' dinna ye aither wag or haud a leein' tongue. A gentleman maunna lee, no even by sayin' naething—na, no gien 't war to win intill the kingdom. But, Guid be thankit, that's whaur leears never come. Maybe ye're thinkin' I ha'e sma' occasion to say sic like to yersel'. An' yet what's yer life but a lee, Ma'colm? You 'at's the honest Marquis o' Lossie to waur yer time an' the stren'th o' yer boady an' the micht o' yer sowl tyauvin' (*wrestling*) wi' a deevil o' a she-horse, whan there's that half-sister o' yer ain gauin' to the verra deevil o' perdition himsel' amang the godless gentry o' Lon'on!"

"What wad ye ha'e me un'erstan' by that, Miss Horn?" returned Malcolm. "I hear no ill o' her. I daursay she's no jist a sa'nt yet, but that's no to be luiked for in ane o' the breed: they maun a' try the warl' first ony gait. There's a heap o' fowk—an' no aye the warst, maybe," continued Malcolm, thinking of his father, "'at wull ha'e their bite o' the aipple afore they spite it oot. But for my leddy sister, she's owre prood ever to disgrace hersel'."

"Weel, maybe, gien she bena misguidit by them she's wi'. But I'm no sae muckle concernt aboot her. Only it's plain 'at ye ha'e no richt to lead her intill temptation."

"Hoo am I temptin' at her, mem?"

"That's plain to half an e'e. Ir ye no lattin' her live believin' a lee? Ir ye no allooin' her to gang on as gien she was somebody mair nor mortal, when ye ken she's nae mair Marchioness o' Lossie nor ye're the son o' auld Duncan MacPhail? Faith, ye ha'e lost trowth gien ye ha'e gaint the warl' i' the cheenge o' forbeirs!"

"Mint at naething again the deid, mem. My father's gane till's accoont; an' it's weel for him he has his father an' no his sister to pronoonce upo' him."

"'Deed ye're right there, laddie," said Miss Horn, in a subdued tone.

"He's made it up wi' my mither afore noo, I'm thinkin'; an' ony gait he confesst her his wife an' me her son afore he dee'd, an' what mair had he time to du?"

"It's fac'," returned Miss Horn. "An' noo luik at yersel': what yer father confesst wi' the verra deid thraw o' a labourin' speerit, to the whilk naething cud ha'e broucht him but the deid thraws (*death struggles*) o' the bodily natur' an' the fear o' hell, that same confession ye row up again i' the cloot o' secrecy, in place o' dightin' wi' 't the blot frae the memory o' ane wha I believe I lo'ed mair as my third cousin nor ye du as yer ain mither!"

"There's no blot upo' her memory, mem," returned the youth, "or I wad be markis the morn. There's never a sowl kens she was mither but kens she was wife—ay, an' whase wife, tu."

Miss Horn had neither wish nor power to reply, and changed her front.

"An' sae, Ma'colm Colonsay," she said, "ye ha'e no less nor made up yer min' to pass yer days in yer ain stable, neither better nor waur than an ostler at the Lossie Airms, an' that efter a' 'at I ha'e borne an' dune to mak a gentleman o' ye, bairdin' yer father here like a verra lion in 's den, an' garrin' him confess the thing again' ilka hair upon the stiff neck o' 'im? Losh, laddie! it was a pictur' to see him stan'in wi' 's back to the door like a camstairy (*obstinate*) bullock!"

"Haud yer tongue, mem, gien ye please. I canna bide to hear my father spoken o' like that. For ye see I lo'ed him afore I kent he was ony drap 's blude to me."

"Weel, that's verra weel; but father an' mither's man and wife, an' ye camna o' a father alane."

"That's true, mem, an' it canna be I sud ever forget yon face ye shawed me i' the coffin, the bonniest, sairest sicht I ever saw," returned Malcolm, with a quaver in his voice.

"But what for cairry yer thouchts to the deid face o' her? Ye kent the leevin' ane weel," objected Miss Horn.

"That's true, mem; but the deid face maist blottit the leevin' oot o' my brain."

"I'm sorry for that.—Eh, laddie, but she was bonny to see!"

"I aye thoucht her the bonniest leddy I ever set e'e upo'. An' dinna think, mem, I'm gaein to forget the deid, 'cause I'm mair concernt aboot the leevin'. I tell ye I jist dinna ken what to du. What wi' my father's deein' words committin' her to my chairge, an' the more than regaird I ha'e to Leddy Florimel hersel', I'm jist whiles driven to ane mair. Hoo can I tak the verra sunsheen oot o' her life 'at I lo'ed afore I kent she was my ain sister, an' jist thoucht lang to win near eneuch till to du her ony guid turn worth duin? An' here I am, her ane half brither, wi' naething i' my pooer but to scaud the hert o' her, or else lee! Supposin' she was weel merried first, hoo wad she stan' wi' her man whan he cam to ken 'at she was nae marchioness—hed no lawfu' richt to ony name but her mither's? An' afore that, what richt cud I ha'e to alloo ony man to merry her ohn kent the trowth aboot her? Faith, it wad be a fine chance though for the fin'in' oot whether or no the man was worthy o' her! But ye see that micht be to make a playock o' her hert. Puir thing, she luiks doon upo' me frae the tap o' her bonny neck, as frae a h'avenly heicht; but I s' lat her ken yet, gien only I can win at the gait o' 't, that I ha'ena come nigh her for naething."

He gave a sigh with the words, and a pause followed.

"The trowth's the trowth," resumed Miss Horn, "neither mair nor less."

"Ay," responded Malcolm; "but there's a richt an' a wrang time for the telling' o' 't. It's no as gien I had had han' or tongue in ony foregane lee. It was naething o' my duin', as ye ken, mem. To mysel', I was never onything but a fisherman born. I confess 'at whiles, when we wad be lyin' i' the lee o' the nets, tethered to them like, wi' the win' blawin' strong 'an steady, I ha'e thocht wi' mysel' 'at I kent naething aboot my father, an' what gien it sud turn oot 'at I was the son o' somebody—what wad I du wi' my siller?"

"An' what thoucht ye ye wad du, laddie?" asked Miss Horn gently.

"What but bigg a harbour at Scaurnose for the puir fisher fowk 'at was like my ain flesh and blude!"

"Weel," rejoined Miss Horn eagerly, "div ye no look upo' that as a voo to the Almichty—a voo 'at ye're bun' to pay, noo 'at ye ha'e yer wuss? An' it's no merely 'at *ye* ha'e the means, but there's no anither that has the richt; for they're yer ain fowk, 'at ye gaither rent frae, an 'at's been for mony a generation sattlet upo' yer lan'—though for the maitter o' the lan', they ha'e had little mair o' that than the birds o' the rock ha'e ohn feued—an' them honest fowks wi' wives an' sowls o' their ain! Hoo upo' airth are ye to du yer duty by them, an' render yer accoont at the last, gien ye dinna tak till ye yer pooer an' reign? Ilk man 'at 's in ony sense a king o' men is bun' to reign ower them *in* that sense. I ken little aboot things mysel', an' I ha'e no feelin's to guide me, but I ha'e a wheen cowmon sense, an' that maun jist stan' for the lave."

A silence followed.

"What for speak na ye, Ma'colm?" said Miss Horn, at length.

"I was jist tryin'," he answered, "to min' upon a twa lines 'at I cam' upo' the ither day in a buik 'at Maister Graham gied me afore he gaed awa—'cause I reckon he kent them a' by hert. They say jist sic like's ye been sayin', mem—gien I cud but min' upo' them. They're aboot a man 'at aye does the richt gait—made by ane they ca' Wordsworth."

"I ken naething aboot him," said Miss Horn, with emphasized indifference.

"An' I ken but little: I s' ken mair or lang though. This is hoo the piece begins:—

Who is the happy warrior? Who is he
That every Man in arms should wish to be?
—It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his childish thought.

—There! that's what ye wad hae o' me, mem!"

"Hear till him!" cried Miss Horn. "The man's i' the richt, though naebody never h'ard o' 'im. Haud ye by that, Ma'colm, an' dinna ye rist till ye ha'e biggit a harbour to the men an' women o' Scaurnose. Wha kens hoo mony may gang to the boddom afore it be dune, jist for the want o' 't?"

"The fundation maun be laid in richteousness, though, mem, else—what gien 't war to save lives better lost?"

"That belangs to the Michty," said Miss Horn.

"Ay, but the layin' o' the fundation belangs to me. An' I'll no du't till I can du't ohn ruint my sister."

"Weel, there's ae thing clear: ye'll never ken what to do sae lang's ye hing on aboot a stable, fu' o' fower-fittet animals wantin' sense—an' some twa-fittet 'at has less."

"I doobt ye're richt there, mem; and gien I cud but tak puir Kelpie awa' wi' me——"

"Hoots! I'm affrontit wi' ye. Kelpie—quo he! Preserve's a'! The laad 'ill lat his ain sister gang, an' bide at hame wi' a mere!"

Malcolm held his peace.

"Ay, I'm thinkin' I maun gang," he said at length.

"Whaur till, than?" asked Miss Horn.

"Ow! to Lon'on—whaur ither?"

"And what'll yer lordship du there?"

"Dinna say *lordship* to me, mem, or I'll think ye're jeerin' at me. What wad the caterpillar say," he added, with a laugh, "gien ye ca'd her *my leddie Psyche?*"

Malcolm of course pronounced the Greek word in Scotch fashion.

"I ken naething aboot yer Seechies or yer Sukies," rejoined Miss Horn. "I ken 'at ye're bun' to be a lord and no a stableman, an' I s' no lat ye rist till ye up an' say *what neist?*"

"It's what I ha'e been sayin' for the last three month," said Malcolm.

"Ay, I daursay; but ye ha'e been sayin' 't upo' the braid o' yer back, and I wad ha'e ye up an' sayin' 't."

"Gien I but kent what to du!" said Malcolm, for the thousandth time.

"Ye can at least gang whaur ye ha'e a chance o' learnin'," returned his friend.—"Come an' tak yer supper wi' me the nicht—a rizzart haddie an' an egg, an' I'll tell ye mair aboot yer mither."

But Malcolm avoided a promise, lest it should interfere with what he might find best to do.

## CHAPTER IV.

### KELPIE'S AIRING.

When Miss Horn left him—with a farewell kindlier than her greeting—rendered yet more restless by her talk, he went back to the stable, saddled Kelpie, and took her out for an airing.

As he passed the factor's house, Mrs Crathie saw him from the window. Her colour rose. She rose herself also, and looked after him from the door—a proud and peevish woman, jealous of her husband's dignity, still more jealous of her own.

"The verra image o' the auld markis!" she said to herself; for in the recesses of her bosom she spoke the Scotch she scorned to utter aloud; "and sits jist like himsel', wi' a wee stoop i' the saiddle, and ilka noo an' than a swing o' his haill boady back, as gien some thoucht had set him straught.—Gien the fractious brute wad but brak a bane or twa o' him!" she went on in growing anger. "The impidence o' the fallow! He has his leave: what for disna he tak' it an' gang? But oot o' this gang he sall. To ca' a man like mine a heepocreet 'cause he wadna procleem till a haill market ilka secret fau't o' the horse he had to sell! Haith, he cam' upo' the wrang side o' the sheet to play the lord and maister here! and that I can tell him!"

The mare was fresh, and the roads through the policy hard both by nature and by frost, so that he could not let her go, and had enough to do with her. He turned, therefore, towards the sea-gate, and soon reached the shore. There, westward of the Seaton, where the fisher folk lived, the sand lay smooth, flat, and wet along the edge of the receding tide: he gave Kelpie the rein, and she sprang into a wild gallop, every now and then flinging her heels as high as her rider's head. But finding, as they approached the stony part from which rose the great rock called the Bored Craig, that he could not pull her up in time, he turned her head towards the long dune of sand which, a little beyond the tide, ran parallel with the shore. It was dry and loose, and the ascent steep. Kelpie's hoofs sank at every step, and when she reached the top, with wide-spread struggling haunches, and "nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim," he had her in hand. She stood panting, yet pawing and dancing, and making the sand fly in all directions.

Suddenly a woman with a child in her arms rose, as it seemed to Malcolm, under Kelpie's very head. She wheeled and reared, and, in wrath or in terror, strained every nerve to unseat her rider, while, whether from faith or despair, the woman stood still as a statue, staring at the struggle.

"Haud awa' a bit, Lizzy," cried Malcolm. "She's a mad brute, an' I mayna be able to haud her. Ye ha'e the bairnie, ye see!"

She was a young woman, with a sad white face. To what Malcolm said she paid no heed, but stood with her child in her arms and gazed at Kelpie as she went on plunging and kicking about on the top of the dune.

"I reckon ye wadna care though the she-deevil knockit oot yer harns; but ye ha'e the bairn, woman! Ha'e mercy on the bairn, an' rin to the boddom."

"I want to speak to ye, Ma'colm MacPhail," she said, in a tone whose very stillness revealed a depth of trouble.

"I doobt I canna hearken to ye richt the noo," said Malcolm. "But bide a wee."

He swung himself from Kelpie's back, and, hanging hard on the bit with one hand, searched with the other in the pocket of his coat, saying, as he did so—

"Sugar, Kelpie! sugar!"

The animal gave an eager snort, settled on her feet, and began snuffing about him. He made haste, for, if her eagerness should turn to impatience, she would do her endeavour to bite him. After crunching three or four lumps, she stood pretty quiet, and Malcolm must make the best of what time she would give him.

"Noo, Lizzy!" he said hurriedly. "Speyk while ye can."

"Ma'colm," said the girl, and looked him full in the face for a moment, for agony had overcome shame; then her gaze sought the far horizon, which to seafaring people is as the hills whence cometh their aid to the people who dwell among mountains; "—Ma'colm, he's gaein' to merry Leddy Florimel."

Malcolm started. Could the girl have learned more concerning his sister than had yet reached himself? A fine watching over her was his, truly! But who was this *he?*

Lizzy had never uttered the name of the father of her child, and all her people knew was that he could not be a fisherman, for then he would have married her before the child was born. But Malcolm had had a suspicion from the first, and now her words all but confirmed it.—And was that fellow going to marry his sister? He turned white with dismay—then red with anger, and stood speechless.

But he was quickly brought to himself by a sharp pinch under the shoulder blade from Kelpie's long teeth: he had forgotten her, and she had taken the advantage.

"Wha tellt ye that, Lizzy?" he said.

"I'm no at leeberty to say, Ma'colm, but I'm sure it's true, an' my hert's like to brak."

"Puir lassie!" said Malcolm, whose own trouble had never at any time rendered him insensible to that of others. "But is't onybody 'at *kens* what he says?" he pursued.

"Weel, I dinna jist richtly ken gien she *kens*, but I think she maun ha'e gude rizzon, or she wadna say as she says. Oh me! me! my bairnie 'ill be scornin' me sair whan he comes to ken. Ma'colm, ye're the only ane 'at disna luik doon upo' me, an' whan ye cam' ower the tap o' the Boar's Tail, it was like an angel in a fire-flaucht, an' something inside me said—*Tell 'im; tell 'im;* an' sae I bude to tell ye."

Malcolm was even too simple to feel flattered by the girl's confidence, though to be trusted is a greater *compliment* than to be loved.

"Hearken, Lizzy!" he said. "I canna e'en think, wi' this brute ready ilka meenute to ate me up. I maun tak' her hame. Efter that, gien ye wad like to tell me onything, I s' be at yer service. Bide aboot here—or, luik ye: here's the key o' yon door; come throu' that intil the park—throu' aneth the toll-ro'd, ye ken. There ye'll get into the lythe (*lee*) wi' the bairnie; an' I'll be wi' ye in a quarter o' an hoor. It'll tak' me but twa meenutes to gang hame. Stoat 'ill put up the mere, and I'll be back—I can du't in ten meenutes."

"Eh! dinna hurry for me, Ma'colm: I'm no worth it," said Lizzy.

But Malcolm was already at full speed along the top of the dune.

"Lord preserve 's!" cried Lizzy, when she saw him clear the brass swivel. "Sic a laad as that is! Eh, he maun ha'e a richt lass to lo'e him some day! It's a' ane to him, boat or beast. He wadna turn frae the deil himsel'. An syne he's jist as saft's a deuk's neck when he speyks till a wuman or a bairn—ay, or an auld man aither!"

And full of trouble as it was about another, Lizzy's heart yet ached at the thought that she should be so unworthy of one like him.

## CHAPTER V.

### LIZZY FINDLAY.

FROM the sands she saw him gain the turnpike road with a bound and a scramble. Crossing it he entered the park by the sea-gate; she had to enter it by the tunnel that passed under the same road. She approached the grated door, unlocked it, and looked in with a shudder. It was dark, the other end of it being obscured by trees, and the roots of the hill on whose top stood the temple of the winds. Through the tunnel blew what seemed quite another wind—one of death, from regions beneath. She drew her shawl, one end of which was rolled about her baby, closer around them both ere she entered. Never before had she set foot within the place, and a strange horror of it filled her: she did not know that by that passage, on a certain lovely summer night, Lord Meikleham had issued to meet her on the sands under the moon. The sea was not terrible to her; she knew all its ways nearly as well as Malcolm knew the moods of Kelpie; but the earth and its ways were less known to her, and to turn her face towards it and enter by a little door into its bosom was like a visit to her grave. But she gathered her strength, entered with a shudder, passed in growing hope and final safety through it, and at the other end came out again into the light, only the cold of its death seemed to cling to her still. But the day had grown colder; the clouds that, seen or unseen, ever haunt the winter sun, had at length caught and shrouded him, and through the gathering vapours he looked ghastly. The wind blew from the sea. The tide was going down. There was snow in the air. The thin leafless trees were all bending away from the shore, and the wind went sighing, hissing, and almost wailing through their bare boughs and budless twigs. There would be a storm, she thought, ere the morning, but none of their people were out.

Had there been—well, she had almost ceased to care about anything, and her own life was so little to her now, that she had become less able to value that of other people. To this had the *ignis fatuus* of a false love brought her! She had dreamed heedlessly, to awake sorrowfully. But not until she heard he was going to be married, had she come right awake, and now she could dream no more. Alas! alas! what claim had she upon him? How could she tell, since such he was, what poor girl like herself she might not have robbed of her part in him?

Yet even in the midst of her misery and despair, it was some consolation to think that Malcolm was her friend.

Not knowing that he had already suffered from the blame of her fault, or the risk at which he met her, she would have gone towards the house to meet him the sooner, had not this been a part of the grounds where she knew Mr Crathie tolerated no one without express leave given. The fisher folk in particular must keep to the road by the other side of the burn, to which the sea-gate admitted them. Lizzy therefore lingered near the tunnel, afraid of being seen.

Mr Crathie was a man who did well under authority, but upon the top of it was consequential, overbearing, and far more exacting than the marquis. Full of his employer's importance when he was present, and of his own when he was absent, he was yet in the latter circumstances so doubtful of its adequate recognition by those under him, that he had grown very imperious, and resented with indignation the slightest breach of his orders. Hence he was in no great favour with the fishers.

Now all the day he had been fuming over Malcolm's behaviour to him in the morning, and when he went home and learned that his wife had seen him upon Kelpie, as if nothing had happened, he became furious, and, in this possession of the devil, was at the present moment wandering about the grounds, brooding on the words Malcolm had spoken. He could not get rid of them. They caused an acrid burning in his bosom, for they had in them truth, like which no poison stings.

Malcolm, having crossed by the great bridge at the house, hurried down the western side of the burn to find Lizzy, and soon came upon her, walking up and down.

"Eh, lassie, ye maun be cauld!" he said.

"No that cauld," she answered, and with the words burst into tears. "But naebody says a kin' word to me noo," she said in excuse, "an' I canna weel bide the soun' o' ane when it comes; I'm no used till 't."

"Naebody?" exclaimed Malcolm.

"Na, naebody," she answered. "My mither winna, my father daurna, an' the bairnie canna, an' I gang near naebody forbye."

"Weel, we maunna stan' oot here i' the cauld: come this gait," said Malcolm. "The bairnie 'll get its deid."

"There wadna be mony to greit at that," returned Lizzy, and pressed the child closer to her bosom.

Malcolm led the way to the little chamber contrived under the temple in the heart of the hill, and unlocking the door made her enter. There he seated her in a comfortable chair, and wrapped her in the plaid he had brought for the purpose. It was all he could do to keep from taking her in his arms for very pity, for, both body and soul, she seemed too frozen to shiver. He shut the door, sat down on the table near her, and said :

"There's naebody to disturb 's here, Lizzie : what wad ye say to me noo?"

The sun was nearly down, and its light already almost smothered in clouds, so that the little chamber, whose door and window were in the deep shadow of the hill, was nearly dark.

"I wadna hae ye tell me onything ye promised no to tell," resumed Malcolm, finding she did not reply, "but I wad like to hear as muckle as ye can say."

"I hae naething to tell ye, Ma'colm, but jist 'at my leddy Florimel's gauin' to be merried upo' Lord Meikleham—Lord Liftore, they ca' him noo. Hech me!"

"God forbid she sud be merried upon ony sic' a bla'guard!" cried Malcolm.

"Dinna ca' 'im ill names, Ma'colm. I canna bide it, though I hae no richt to tak up the stick for him."

"I wadna say a word 'at micht fa' sair on a sair hert," he returned; "but gien ye kent a', ye wad ken I hed a gey-sized craw to pluck wi' 's lordship mysel'."

The girl gave a low cry.

"Ye wadna hurt 'im, Ma'colm!" she said, in terror at the thought of the elegant youth in the clutches of an angry fisherman, even if he were the generous Malcolm MacPhail himself.

"I wad raither not," he replied, "but we maun see hoo he cairries himsel'."

"Du naething till 'im for my sake, Ma'colm. Ye can hae naething again' him yersel'."

It was too dark for Malcolm to see the keen look of wistful regret with which Lizzie tried to pierce the gloom and read his face: for a moment the poor girl thought he meant he had loved her himself. But far other thoughts were in Malcolm's mind: one was that her whom, as a scarce approachable goddess, he had loved before he knew her of his own blood, he would rather see married to an honest fisherman in the Seaton of Portlossie, than to such a lord as Meikleham. He had seen enough of him at Lossie House to know what he was, and puritanical fish-catching Malcolm had ideas above those of most marquises of his day: the thought of the alliance was horrible to him. It was possibly not inevitable, however! only what could he do, and at the same time avoid grievous hurt?

"I dinna think he'll ever merry my leddy," he said.

"What gars ye say that, Ma'colm?" returned Lizzy, with eagerness.

"I canna tell ye jist i' the noo; but ye ken a body canna weel be aye aboot a place ohn seen things. I'll tell ye something o' mair consequence hooever," he continued. "—Some fowk say there's a God, an' some say there's nane, an' I ha'e no richt to preach to ye, Lizzy; but I maun jist tell ye this—'at gien God dinna help them 'at cry till 'im i' the warst o' tribles, they micht jist as weel ha'e nae God at a'. For my ain pairt I ha'e been helpit, an' I think it was him intil 't. Wi' his help, a man may warstle throu' onything. I say I think it was himsel' tuik me throu' 't, an' here I stan' afore ye, ready for the neist trible, an' the help 'at 'll come wi' 't. What it may be, God only knows!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### MR CRATHIE.

He was interrupted by the sudden opening of the door, and the voice of the factor in exultant wrath.

"MacPhail!" it cried. "Come out with you. Don't think to sneak there. *I* know you. What right have you to be on the premises? Didn't I send you about your business this morning?"

"Ay, sir, but ye didna pey me my wages," said Malcolm, who had sprung to the door and now stood holding it half shut, while Mr Crathie pushed it half open.

"No matter. You're nothing better than a housebreaker if you enter any building about the place."

"I brak nae lock," returned Malcolm. "I ha'e the key my lord gae me to ilka place 'ithin the wa's excep' the strong room."

"Give it me directly. *I'm* master here now."

"'Deed, I s' du nae sic thing, sir. What he gae me I'll keep."

"Give up that key, or I'll go at once and get a warrant against you for theft."

"Weel, we s' refar't to Maister Soutar."

"Damn your impudence—'at *I* sud say't!—what has he to do with my affairs? Come out of that directly."

"Huly, huly, sir!" returned Malcolm, in terror lest he should discover who was with him.

"You low-bred rascal! Who have you there with you?"

As he spoke Mr Crathie would have forced his way into the dusky chamber, where he could just perceive a motionless undefined form. But stiff as a statue Malcolm kept his stand, and the door was immovable. Mr Crathie gave a second and angrier push, but the youth's corporeal as well as his mental equilibrium was hard to upset, and his enemy drew back in mounting fury.

"Get out of there," he cried, "or I'll horsewhip you for a damned blackguard."

"Whup awa'," said Malcolm, "but in here ye s' no come the nicht."

The factor rushed at him, his heavy whip upheaved—and the same moment found himself, not in the room, but lying on the flower-bed in front of it. Malcolm instantly stepped out, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and turned to assist him But he was up already, and busy with words unbefitting the mouth of an elder of the kirk.

"Didna I say 'at ye sudna come in, sir? What for wull fowk no tak' a tellin'?" expostulated Malcolm.

But the factor was far beyond force of logic or illumination of reason. He raved and swore.

"Get oot o' my sicht," he cried, "or I'll shot ye like a tyke."

"Gang an' fess yer gun," said Malcolm, "an' gien ye fin' me waitin' for ye, ye can lat at me."

The factor uttered a horrible imprecation on himself if he did not make him pay dearly for his behaviour.

"Hoots, sir! Be asham't o' yersel'. Gang hame to the mistress, an' I s' be up the morn's mornin' for my wages."

"If ye set foot on the grounds again, I'll set every dog in the place upon you."

Malcolm laughed.

"Gien I was to turn the order the ither gait, wad they min' you or me, div ye think, Maister Crathie?"

"Give me that key, and go about your business."

"Na, na, sir! What my lord gae me I s' keep—for a' the factors atween this an' the Land's En'," returned Malcolm. "An' for lea'in' the place, gien I be na in your service, Maister Crathie, I'm nae un'er your orders. I'll gang whan it shuits me. An' mair yet, ye s' gang oot o' this first, or I s' gar ye, an' that ye'll see."

It was a violent proceeding, but for a matter of manners he was not going to risk what of her good name poor Lizzy had left: like the books of the Sibyl, that grew in value. He made, however, but one threatful stride towards the factor, for the great man turned and fled.

The moment he was out of sight, Malcolm unlocked the door, led Lizzy out, and brought her through the tunnel to the sands. There he left her, and set out for Scaurnose.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BLUE PETER.

The door of Blue Peter's cottage was opened by his sister. Not much at home in the summer, when she carried fish to the country, she was very little absent in the winter, and as there was but one room for all uses, except the closet bedroom and the garret at the top of the ladder, Malcolm, instead of going in, called to his friend, whom he saw by the fire with his little Phemy upon his knee, to come out and speak to him.

Blue Peter at once obeyed the summons.

"There's naething wrang, I houp, Ma'colm?" he said, as he closed the door behind him.

"Maister Graham wad say," returned Malcolm, "naething ever was wrang but what ye did wrang yersel', or wadna pit richt whan ye had a chance. I ha'e him nae mair to gang till, Joseph, an' sae I'm come to you. Come doon by, an' i' the scoug o' a rock, I'll tell ye a' aboot it."

"Ye wadna ha'e the mistress no ken o' 't?" said his friend. "I dinna jist like haein' secrets frae *her*."

"Ye sall jeedge for yersel', man, an' tell her or no just as ye like. Only she maun haud her tongue, or the black dog 'll ha'e a' the butter."

"She can haud her tongue like the tae-stane o' a grave," said Peter.

As they spoke they reached the cliff that hung over the shattered shore. It was a clear, cold night. Snow, the remnants of the last storm, which frost had preserved in every shadowy spot, lay all about them. The sky was clear, and full of stars, for the wind that blew cold from the north-west had dispelled the snowy clouds. The waves rushed into countless gulfs and crannies and straits on the ruggedest of shores, and the sounds of waves and wind kept calling like voices from the unseen. By a path, seemingly fitter for goats than men, they descended half-way to the beach, and under a great projection of rock stood sheltered from the wind. Then Malcolm turned to Joseph Mair, commonly called Blue Peter, because he had been a man-of-war's man, and laying his hand on his arm said :

" Blue Peter, did ever I tell ye a lee ? "

" No, never," answered Peter. "What gars ye speir sic a thing?"

" 'Cause I want ye to believe me noo, an' it winna be easy."

" I'll believe onything ye tell me—'at *can* be believed."

" Weel, I ha'e come to the knowledge 'at my name's no MacPhail : it's Colonsay. Man, I'm the Markis o' Lossie."

Without a moment's hesitation, without a single stare of unbelief or even astonishment, Blue Peter pulled off his bonnet, and stood bareheaded before the companion of his toils.

" Peter ! " cried Malcolm, " dinna brak my hert : put on yer bonnet."

" The Lord o' lords be thankit, my lord ! " said Blue Peter : " the puir man has a freen' this day."

Then replacing his bonnet he said—

" An' what'll be yer lordship's wull ? "

" First and foremost, Peter, that my best freen', efter my auld daddy and the schulemaister, 's no to turn again' me 'cause I hed a markis an' neither piper nor fisher to my father."

" It's no like it, my lord," returned Blue Peter, " whan the first thing I say is—what wad ye ha'e o' me ? Here I am—no speirin' a queston ! "

" Weel, I wad ha'e ye hear the story o' 't a'."

" Say on, my lord," said Peter.

But Malcolm was silent for a few moments.

" I was thinkin', Peter," he said at last, " whether I cud bide to hear you say *my lord* to me. Dootless, as it 'll ha'e to come to that, it wad be better to grow used till 't while we're thegither, sae 'at whan it maun be, it mayna ha'e the luik o' cheenge intil it, for cheenge is jist the thing I canna bide. I' the meantime, hooever, we canna gi'e in till 't, 'cause it wad set fowk jaloosin'. But I wad be obleeged till ye, Peter, gien you wad say *my lord* whiles, whan we're oor lanes, for I wad fain grow sae used till't 'at I never kent ye said it, for 'atween you an' me I dinna like it. An' noo I s' tell ye a' 'at I ken."

When he had ended the tale of what had come to his knowledge, and how it had come, and paused.

" Gie's a grup o' yer han', my lord," said Blue Peter, " an' may God haud ye lang in life an' honour to reule ower us. Noo, gien ye please, what are ye gauin' to du ? "

" Tell ye me, Peter, what ye think I oucht to du."

"That wad tak a heap o' thinkin'," returned the fisherman, "but ae thing seems aboot plain: ye ha'e no richt to lat yer sister gang exposed to temptations ye cud haud frae her. That's no, as ye promised, to be kin' till her. I canna believe that's hoo yer father expeckit o' ye. I ken weel 'at fowk in his poseetion ha'ena the preevileeges o' the like o' hiz—they ha'ena the win, an' the watter, an' whiles a lee shore to gar them know they are but men, an' sen' them rattling at the wicket of h'aven; but still I dinna think, by yer ain accoont, specially noo 'at I houp he's forgi'en an' latten in—God grant it!—I div *not* think he wad like my leddy Florimel to be oon'er the influences o' sic a ane as that Leddy Bellair. Ye maun gang till her. Ye ha'e nae ch'ice, my lord."

"But what am I to do, whan I div gang?"

"That's what ye hev to gang an' see."

"An' that's what I ha'e been tellin' mysel', an' what Miss Horn's been tellin' me tu. But it's a gran' thing to get yer ain thouchts corroborat. Ye see I'm feart for wrangin' her for pride, and bringin' her doon to set mysel' up."

"My lord," said Blue Peter, solemnly, "ye ken the life o' puir fisher fowk; ye ken hoo it micht be lichtened, sae lang as it laists, an' mony a hole steikit 'at the cauld deith creeps in at the noo: coont ye them naething, my lord? Coont ye the wull o' Providence, 'at sets ye ower them, naething? What for could the Lord ha'e gie ye sic an upbringin' as no markis' son ever hed afore ye, or maybe ever wull ha'e efter ye, gien it bena 'at ye sud tak them in han' to du yer pairt by them? Gien ye forsak them noo, ye'll be forgettin' him 'at made them an' you, an' the sea, an' the herrin' to be taen intil 't. Gien ye forget them, there's nae houp for them, but the same deith 'ill keep on swallowin' at them upo' sea an' shore."

"Ye speyk the trowth as I ha'e spoken't till mysel', Peter. Noo, hearken: will ye sail wi' me the nicht for Lon'on toon?"

The fisherman was silent a moment—then answered,

"I wull, my lord; but I maun tell my wife."

"Rin, an' fess her here than, for I'm fleyed at yer sister, honest wuman, an' little Phemy. It wad blaud a' thing gien I was hurried to du something afore I kenned what."

"I s' ha'e her oot in a meenute," said Joseph, and scrambled up the cliff.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### VOYAGE TO LONDON.

For a few minutes Malcolm stood alone in the dim starlight of winter, looking out on the dusky sea, dark as his own future, into which the wind now blowing behind him would soon begin to carry him. He anticipated its difficulties, but never thought of perils: it was seldom anything oppressed him but the doubt of what he ought to do. This was ever the cold mist that swallowed the airy castles he built and peopled with all the friends and acquaintances of his youth. But the very first step towards action is the death-warrant of doubt, and the tide of Malcolm's being ran higher that night, as he stood thus alone under the stars, than he had ever yet known it run. With all his common-sense, and the abundance of his philosophy, which the much leisure belonging to certain phases of his life had combined with the slow strength of his intellect to render somewhat long-winded in utterance, there was yet room in Malcolm's bonnet for a bee above the ordinary size, and if it buzzed a little too romantically for the taste of the nineteenth century, about disguises and surprises and bounty and plots and rescues and such like, something must be pardoned to one whose experience had already been so greatly out of the common, and whose nature was far too childlike and poetic, and developed in far too simple a surrounding of labour and success, difficulty and conquest, danger and deliverance, not to have more than the usual amount of what is called the romantic in its composition.

The buzzing of his bee was for the present interrupted by the return of Blue Peter with his wife. She threw her arms round Malcolm's neck, and burst into tears.

"Hoots, my woman!" said her husband, "what are ye greitin' at?"

"Eh, Peter!" she answered, "I canna help it. It's jist like a deith. He's gauin' to lea' us a', an' gang hame till 's ain, an' I canna bide 'at he sud grow strange-like to hiz 'at ha'e kenned him sae lang."

"It'll be an ill day," returned Malcolm, "whan I grow strange to ony freen'. I'll ha'e to gang far down the laich *(low)* ro'd afore that be poassible. I mayna aye be able to du jist what ye wad like; but lippen ye to me: I s' be fair to ye. An' noo I want Blue Peter to gang wi' me, an' help me to what I ha'e to du—gien ye ha'e nae objection to lat him."

"Na, nane ha'e I. I wad gang mysel' gien I cud be ony use," answered Mrs Mair; "but women are i' the gait whiles."

"Weel, I'll no even say thank ye; I'll be awin' ye that as weel's the lave. But gien I dinna du weel, it winna be the fau't o' ane or the ither o' you twa, freen's. Noo, Peter, we maun be aff."

"No the nicht, surely?" said Mrs Mair, a little taken by surprise.

"The suner the better, lass," replied her husband. "An' we cudna ha'e a better win'. Jist rin ye hame, an' get some vicktooals thegither, an' come efter hiz to Portlossie."

"But hoo 'ill ye get the boat to the watter ohn mair han's? I'll need to come mysel' an' fess Jean."

"Na, na; let Jean sit. There's plenty i' the Seaton to help. We're gauin' to tak' the markis's cutter. She's a heap easier to lainch, an' she'll sail a heap fester."

"But what'll Maister Crathie say?"

"We maun tak' oor chance o' that," answered her husband, with a smile of confidence; and thereupon he and Malcolm set out for the Seaton, while Mrs Mair went home to get ready some provisions for the voyage, consisting chiefly of oatcakes.

The prejudice against Malcolm from his imagined behaviour to Lizzy Findlay, had by this time, partly through the assurances of Peter, partly through the power of the youth's innocent presence, almost died out, and when the two men reached the Seaton, they found plenty of hands ready to help them to reach the little sloop. Malcolm said he was going to take her to Peterhead, and they asked no questions but such as he contrived to answer with truth, or to leave unanswered. Once afloat, there was very little to be done to her, for she had been laid up in perfect condition, and as soon as Mrs Mair appeared with her basket, and they had put that, a keg of water, some fishing-lines, and a pan of mussels for bait, on board, they were ready to sail, and wished their friends a light good-bye, leaving them to imagine they were gone but for a day or two, probably on some business of Mr Crathie's.

With the wind from the north-west, they soon reached Duff Harbour, where Malcolm went on shore and saw Mr Soutar. He, with a landsman's prejudice, made strenuous objections to such a mad prank as sailing to London at that time of the year, but in vain. Malcolm saw nothing mad in it, and the lawyer had to admit he ought to know best. He brought on board with him a lad of Peter's acquaintance, and now fully manned, they set sail again, and by the time the sun appeared were not far from Peterhead.

Malcolm's spirits kept rising as they bowled along over the bright cold waters. He never felt so capable as when at sea. His energies had been first called out in combat with the elements, and hence he always felt strongest, most at home, and surest of himself on the water. Young as he was, however, such had been his training under Mr Graham, that a large part of this elevation of spirit was owing to an unreasoned sense of being there more immediately in the hands of God. Later in life, he interpreted the mental condition thus—that of course he was always and in every place equally in God's hands, but that at sea he felt the truth more keenly. Where a man has nothing firm under him, where his life depends on winds invisible and waters unstable, where a single movement may be death, he learns to feel what is at the same time just as true every night he spends asleep in the bed in which generations have slept before him, or any sunny hour he spends walking over ancestral acres.

They put in at Peterhead, purchased a few provisions, and again set sail.

And now it seemed to Malcolm that he must soon come to a conclusion as to the steps he must take when he reached London. But think as he would, he could plan nothing beyond finding out where his sister lived, going to look at the house, and getting into it if he might. Nor could his companion help him with any suggestions, and indeed he could not talk much with him because of the presence of Davy, a rough, round-eyed, red-haired young Scot, of the dull invaluable class that can only do what they are told, but do that to the extent of their faculty.

They knew all the coast as far as the Frith of Forth ; after that they had to be more careful. They had no charts on board, nor could have made much use of any. But the wind continued favourable, and the weather cold, bright, and full of life. They spoke many coasters on their way, and received many directions.

Off the Nore they had rough weather, and had to stand off and on for a day and a night till it moderated. Then they spoke a fishing-boat, took a pilot on board, and were soon in smooth water. More and more they wondered as the channel narrowed, and ended their voyage at length below London Bridge, in a very jungle of masts.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LONDON STREETS.

LEAVING Davy to keep the sloop, the two fishermen went on shore. Passing from the narrow precincts of the river, they found themselves at once in the roar of London city. Stunned at first, then excited, then bewildered, then dazed, without plan to guide their steps, they wandered about until, unused to the hard stones, their feet ached. It was a dull day in March. A keen wind blew round the corners of the streets. They wished themselves at sea again.

"Sic a sicht o' fowk!" said Blue Peter.

"It's hard to think," rejoined Malcolm, "what w'y the God 'at made them can luik efter them a' in sic a tumult. But they say even the sheep-dog kens ilk sheep i' the flock 'at 's gien him in chairge."

"Ay, but ye see," said Blue Peter, "they're mair like a shoal o' herrin' nor a flock o' sheep."

"It's no the num'er o' them 'at plagues me," said Malcolm. "The gran' diffeeculty is hoo He can lat ilk ane tak' his ain gait an' yet luik efter them a'. But gien He does't, it stan's to rizzon it maun be in some w'y 'at them 'at's sae luikit efter canna by ony possibeelity un'erstan'."

"That's trowth, I'm thinkin'. We maun jist gi'e up an' confess there's things abune a' human comprehension."

"Wha kens but that maybe 'cause i' their verra natur' they're ower semple for cr'aturs like hiz 'at's made sae mixed-like, an' see sae little intill the hert o' things?"

"Ye're ayont me there," said Blue Peter, and a silence followed.

It was a conversation very unsuitable to London Streets—but then these were raw Scotch fisherman, who had not yet learned how absurd it is to suppose ourselves come from anything greater than ourselves, and had no conception of the liberty it confers on a man to know that he is the child of a protoplasm, or something still more beautifully small.

At length a policeman directed them to a Scotch eating-house, where they fared after their country's fashions, and from the landlady gathered directions by which to guide themselves towards Curzon Street, a certain number in which Mr Soutar had given Malcolm as Lady Bellair's address.

The door was opened to Malcolm's knock by a slatternly charwoman, who, unable to understand a word he said, would, but for its fine frank expression, have shut the door in his face. From the expression of hers, however, Malcolm suddenly remembered that he must speak English, and having a plentiful store of the book sort, he at once made himself intelligible in spite of tone and accent. It was, however, only a shifting of the difficulty, for he now found it nearly impossible to understand her. But by repeated questioning and hard listening he learnt at last that Lady Bellair had removed her establishment to Lady Lossie's house in Portland Place.

After many curious perplexities, odd blunders, and vain endeavours to understand shop-signs and notices in the windows; after they had again and again imagined themselves back at a place they had left miles away; after many a useless effort to lay hold of directions given so rapidly that the very sense could not gather the sounds, they at length stood—not in Portland Place, but in front of Westminster Abbey. Inquiring what it was, and finding they could go in, they entered.

For some moments not a word was spoken between them, but when they had walked slowly half-way up the nave Malcolm turned and said, "Eh, Peter! sic a blessin'!" and Peter replied, "There canna be muckle o' this i' the warl'!" Comparing impressions afterwards, Peter said that the moment he stepped in, he heard the rush of the tide on the rocks of Scaurnose; and Malcolm declared he felt as if he had stepped out of the world into the regions of eternal silence.

"What a mercy it maun be," he went on, "to mony a cratur', in sic a whummle an' a rum'le an' a remish as this Lon'on, to ken 'at there is sic a cave howkit oot o' the din, 'at he can gang intill an' say his prayers intill! Man, Peter! I'm jist some feared whiles 'at the verra din i' my lugs mayna 'maist drive the thoucht o' God oot o' me."

At length they found their way into Regent Street, and leaving its mean assertion behind, reached the stately modesty of Portland Place; and Malcolm was pleased to think the house he sought was one of those he now saw.

It was one of the largest in the Place. He would not, however, yield to the temptation to have a good look at it, for fear of attracting attention from its windows and being recognised. They turned therefore aside into some of the smaller thoroughfares lying between Portland Place and Great Portland Street, where searching about, they came upon a decent-looking public-house and inquired after lodgings. They were directed to a woman in the neighbourhood, who kept a dingy little curiosity-shop. On payment of a week's rent in advance, she allowed them a small bedroom. But Malcolm did not want Peter with him that night; he wished to be perfectly free; and besides it was more than desirable that Peter should go and look after the boat and the boy.

Left alone he fell once more to his hitherto futile scheming: How was he to get near his sister? To the whitest of lies he had insuperable objection, and if he appeared before her with no reason to give, would she not be far too offended with his presumption to retain him in her service? And except he could be near her as her servant, he did not see a chance of doing anything for her without disclosing facts which might make all such service as he would most gladly render her impossible, by causing her to hate the very sight of him. Plan after plan rose and passed from his mind rejected, and the only resolution he could come to was to write to Mr Soutar, to whom he had committed the protection of Kelpie, to send her up by the first smack from Aberdeen. He did so, and wrote also to Miss Horn, telling her where he was, then went out, and made his way back to Portland Place.

Night had closed in, and thick vapours hid the moon, but lamps and lighted windows illuminated the wide street. Presently it began to snow. But through the snow and the night went carriages in all directions, with great lamps that turned the flakes into white stars for a moment as they gleamed past. The hoofs of the horses echoed hard from the firm road.

Could that house really belong to him? It did, yet he dared not enter it. That which was dear and precious to him was in the house, and just because of that he could not call it his own. There was less light in it than in any other within his range. He walked up and down the opposite side of the street its whole length some fifty times, but saw no sign of vitality about the house. At length a brougham stopped at the door, and a man got out and knocked. Malcolm instantly crossed, but could not see his face. The door opened, and he entered. The brougham waited. After about a quarter of an hour he came out again, accompanied by two ladies, one of whom he judged by her figure to be Florimel. They all got into the carriage, and Malcolm braced himself for a terrible run. But the coachman drove carefully, the snow lay a few inches deep, and he found no difficulty in keeping near them, following with fleet foot and husbanded breath.

They stopped at the doors of a large dark-looking building in a narrow street. He thought it was a church, and wondered that his sister should be going there on a week night. Nor did the aspect of the entrance hall, into which he followed them, undeceive him. It was more showy, certainly, than the vestibule of any church he had ever been in before, but what might not churches be in London? They went up a great flight of stairs—to reach the gallery, as he thought, and still he went after them. When he reached the top, they were just vanishing round a curve, and his advance was checked: a man came up to him, said he could not come there, and gruffly requested him to show his ticket.

"I haven't got one. What is this place?" said Malcolm, whom the aspect of the man had suddenly rendered doubtful, mouthing his English with Scotch deliberation.

The man gave him a look of contemptuous surprise, and turning to another who lounged behind him with his hands in his pockets, said—

"Tom, here's a gentleman as wants to know where he is: can you tell him?"

The person addressed laughed, and gave Malcolm a queer look.

"Every cock crows on his own midden," said Malcolm, "but if I were on mine, I would try to be civil."

"You go down there, and pay for a pit ticket, and you'll soon know where you are, mate," said Tom.

Malcolm obeyed, and after a few inquiries, and the outlay of two shillings, found himself in the pit of one of the largest of the London theatres.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE TEMPEST.

The play was begun, and the stage was the centre of light. Thither Malcolm's eyes were drawn the instant he entered. He was all but unaware of the multitude of faces about him, and his attention was at once fascinated by the lovely show revealed in soft radiance. But surely he had seen the vision before! One long moment its effect upon him was as real as if he had been actually deceived as to its nature: was it not the shore between Scaurnose and Portlossie, betwixt the Boar's Tail and the sea? and was not that the marquis, his father, in his dressing-gown, pacing to and fro upon the sands? He yielded himself to illusion—abandoned himself to the wonderful, and looked only for what would come next.

A lovely lady entered: to his excited fancy it was Florimel. A moment more and she spoke.

> If by your art, my dearest father, you have
> Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.

Then first he understood that before him rose in wondrous realization the play of Shakspere he knew best—the first he had ever read: *The Tempest*, hitherto a lovely phantom for the mind's eye, now embodied to the enraptured sense. During the whole of the first act he never thought either of Miranda or Florimel apart. At the same time so taken was he with the princely carriage and utterance of Ferdinand that, though with a sigh, he consented he should have his sister.

The drop-scene had fallen for a minute or two before he began to look around him. A moment more and he had commenced a thorough search for his sister amongst the ladies in the boxes. But when at length he found her, he dared not fix his eyes upon her lest his gaze should make her look at him, and she should recognise him. Alas, her eyes might have rested on him twenty times without his face once rousing in her mind the thought of the fisher-lad of Portlossie! All that had passed between them in the days already old was virtually forgotten.

By degrees he gathered courage, and soon began to feel that there was small chance indeed of her eyes alighting upon him for the briefest of moments. Then he looked more closely, and felt through rather than saw with his eyes that some sort of change had already passed upon her. It was Florimel, yet not the very Florimel he had known. Already something had begun to supplant the girl-freedom that had formerly in every look and motion asserted itself. She was more beautiful, but not so lovely in his eyes; much of what had charmed him had vanished. She was more stately, but the stateliness had a little hardness mingled with it: and could it be that the first of a cloud had already gathered on her forehead? Surely she was not so happy as she had been at Lossie House. She was dressed in black, with a white flower in her hair.

Beside her sat the bold-faced countess, and behind them her nephew, Lord Meikleham that was—now Lord Liftore. A fierce indignation seized the heart of Malcolm at the sight. Behind the form of the earl, his mind's eye saw that of Lizzy, out in the wind on the Boar's Tail, her old shawl wrapped about herself and the child of the man who sat there so composed and comfortable. His features were fine and clear-cut, his shoulders broad, and his head well set: he had much improved since Malcolm offered to fight him with one hand in the dining-room of Lossie House. Every now and then he leaned forward between his aunt and Florimel, and spoke to the latter. To Malcolm's eyes she seemed to listen with some haughtiness. Now and then she cast him an indifferent glance. Malcolm was pleased: Lord Liftore was anything but the Ferdinand to whom he could consent to yield his Miranda. They would make a fine couple certainly, but for any other fitness, knowing what he did, Malcolm was glad to perceive none. The more annoyed was he when once or twice he fancied he caught a look between them that indicated more than acquaintanceship—some sort of intimacy at least. But he reflected that in the relation in which they stood to Lady Bellair it could hardly be otherwise.

The play was tolerably well put upon the stage, and free of the absurdities attendant upon too ambitious an endeavour to represent to the sense things which Shakspere and the dramatists of his period freely committed to their best and most powerful ally, the willing imagination of the spectators. The opening of the last scene, where Ferdinand and Miranda are discovered at chess, was none the less effective for its simplicity, and Malcolm was turning from a delighted gaze at its loveliness to glance at his sister and her companions, when his eyes fell on a face near him in the pit which had fixed an absorbed regard in the same direction. It was that of a man a few years older than himself, with irregular features, but a fine mouth, large chin, and great forehead. Under the peculiarly prominent eyebrows shone dark eyes of wondrous brilliancy and seeming penetration. Malcolm could not but suspect that his gaze was upon his sister, but as they were a long way from the boxes, he could not be certain. Once he thought he saw her look at him, but of that also he could be in no wise certain.

He knew the play so well that he rose just in time to reach the pit-door ere exit should be impeded with the outcomers, and thence with some difficulty he found his way to the foot of the stair up which those he watched had gone. There he had stood but a little while, when he saw in front of him, almost within reach of an outstretched hand, the same young man waiting also. After what seemed a long time, he saw his sister and her two companions come slowly down the stair in the descending crowd. Her eyes seemed searching amongst the multitude that filled the lobby. Presently an indubitable glance of still recognition passed between them, and by a slight movement the young man placed himself so that she must pass next him in the crowd. Malcolm got one place nearer in the change, and thought they grasped hands. She turned her head slightly back, and seemed to put a question—with her lips only. He replied in the same manner. A light rushed into her face and vanished. But not a feature moved and not a word had been spoken. Neither of her companions had seen the dumb show, and her friend stood where he was till they had left the house. Malcolm stood also, much inclined to follow him when he went, but, his attention having been attracted for a moment in another direction, when he looked again he had disappeared. He sought him where he fancied he saw the movement of his vanishing, but was soon convinced of the uselessness of the attempt, and walked home.

Before he reached his lodging, he had resolved on making trial of a plan which had more than once occurred to him, but had as often been rejected as too full of the risk of repulse.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DEMON AND THE PIPES.

HIS plan was to watch the house until he saw some entertainment going on, then present himself as if he had but just arrived from her ladyship's country seat. At such a time no one would acquaint her with his appearance, and he would, as if it were but a matter of course, at once take his share in waiting on the guests. By this means he might perhaps get her a little accustomed to his presence before she could be at leisure to challenge it.

When he put Kelpie in her stall the last time for a season, and ran into the house to get his plaid for Lizzy, who was waiting him near the tunnel, he bethought himself that he had better take with him also what other of his personal requirements he could carry. He looked about therefore, and finding a large carpet-bag in one of the garret rooms, hurried into it some of his clothes—amongst them the Highland dress he had worn as henchman to the marquis, and added the great Lossie pipes his father had given to old Duncan as well, but which the piper had not taken with him when he left Lossie House. The said Highland dress he now resolved to put on, as that in which latterly Florimel had been most used to see him: in it he would watch his opportunity of gaining admission to the house.

The next morning Blue Peter made his appearance early. They went out together, spent the day in sight-seeing, and, on Malcolm's part chiefly, in learning the topography of London.

In Hyde Park Malcolm told his friend that he had sent for Kelpie.

"She'll be the deid o' ye i' thae streets, as fu' o' wheels as the sea o' fish: twize I've been 'maist gr'un to poother o' my ro'd here," said Peter.

"Ay, but ye see, oot here amo' the gentry it's no freely sae ill, an' the ro'ds are no a' stane; an' here, ye see, 's the place whaur they come, leddies an' a', to ha'e their rides thegither. What I'm fleyt for is 'at she'll be brackin' legs wi' her deevilich kickin'."

"Haud her upo' dry strae an' watter for a whilie, till her banes begin to cry oot for something to hap them frae the cauld: that'll quaiet her a bit," said Peter.

"It's a' ye ken!" returned Malcolm. "She's aye the waunatur'd, the less she has to ate. Na, na; she maun be weel lined. The deevil in her maun lie warm, or she'll be neither to haud nor bin'. There's nae doobt she's waur to haud in whan she's in guid condeetion; but she's nane sae like to tak' a body by the sma' o' the back, an' shak the inside oot o' 'im, as she 'maist did ae day to the herd-laddie at the ferm, only he had an auld girth aboot the mids o' 'im for a belt, an' he tuik the less scaith."

"Cudna we gang an' see the maister the day?" said Blue Peter, changing the subject.

He meant Mr Graham, the late schoolmaster of Portlossie, whom the charge of heretical teaching had driven from the place.

"We canna weel du that till we hear whaur he is. The last time Miss Horn h'ard frae him, he was changin' his lodgin's, an' ye see the kin' o' a place this Lon'on is," answered Malcolm.

As soon as Peter was gone, to return to the boat, Malcolm dressed himself in his kilt and its belongings, and when it was fairly dusk, took his pipes under his arm, and set out for Portland Place. He had the better hope of speedy success to his plan, that he fancied he had read on his sister's lips, in the silent communication that passed between her and her friend in the crowd, the words *come* and *to-morrow.* It might have been the merest imagination, yet it was something: how often have we not to be grateful for shadows! Up and down the street he walked a long time, without seeing a sign of life about the house. But at length the hall was lighted. Then the door opened, and a servant rolled out a carpet over the wide pavement, which the snow had left wet and miry—a signal for the street children, ever on the outlook for sights, to gather. Before the first carriage arrived, there was already a little crowd of humble watchers and waiters about the gutter and curb-stone. But they were not destined to much amusement that evening, the visitors amounting only to a small dinner-party. Still they had the pleasure of seeing a few grand ladies issue from their carriages, cross the stage of their Epiphany, the pavement, and vanish in the paradise of the shining hall, with its ascent of gorgeous stairs. No broken steps, no missing balusters there! And they have the show all for nothing! It is one of the perquisites of street-service. What one would give to see the shapes glide over the field of those cameræ obscuræ, the hearts of the street Arabs! once to gaze on the jewelled beauties through the eyes of those shocked-haired girls! I fancy they do not often begrudge them what they possess, except perhaps when feature or hair or motion chances to remind them of some one of their own people, and they feel wronged and indignant that *she* should flaunt in such splendour, "when *our Sally* would set off grand clothes so much better!" It is neither the wealth nor the general consequence it confers that they envy, but, as I imagine, the power of making a show—of living in the eyes and knowledge of neighbours for a few radiant moments: nothing is so pleasant to ordinary human nature as to know itself by its reflection from others. When it turns from these warped and broken mirrors to seek its reflection in the divine thought, then it is redeemed; then it beholds itself in the perfect law of liberty.

Before he became himself an object of curious interest to the crowd he was watching, Malcolm had come to the same conclusion with many a philosopher and observer of humanity before him—that on the whole the rags are inhabited by the easier hearts; and he would have arrived at the conclusion with more certainty but for the *high* training that cuts off intercourse between heart and face.

When some time had elapsed, and no more carriages appeared, Malcolm, judging the dinner must now be in full vortex, rang the bell of the front door. It was opened by a huge footman, whose head was so small in proportion that his body seemed to have absorbed it. Malcolm would have stepped in at once, and told what of his tale he chose at his leisure; but the servant, who had never seen the dress Malcolm wore, except on street-beggars, with the instinct his class shares with watch-dogs, quickly closed the door. Ere it reached the post, however, it found Malcolm's foot between.

"Go along, Scotchy. You're not wanted here," said the man pushing the door hard. "Police is round the corner."

Now one of the weaknesses Malcolm owed to his Celtic blood was an utter impatience of rudeness. In his own nature entirely courteous, he was wrathful even to absurdity at the slightest suspicion of insult. But that, in part through the influence of Mr Graham, the schoolmaster, he had learned to keep a firm hold on the reins of action, this foolish feeling would not unfrequently have hurried him into conduct undignified. On the present occasion, I fear the main part of his answer, but for the shield of the door, would have been a blow to fell a bigger man than the one that now glared at him through the shoe-broad opening. As it was, his words were fierce with suppressed wrath.

"Open the door, an' lat me in," was, however, all he said.

"What's your business?" asked the man, on whom his tone had its effect.

"My business is with my Lady Lossie," said Malcolm, recovering his English, which was one step towards mastering, if not recovering, his temper.

"You can't see her. She's at dinner."

"Let me in, and I'll wait. I come from Lossie House."

"Take away your foot and I'll go and see," said the man.

"No. You open the door," returned Malcolm.

The man's answer was an attempt to kick his foot out of the doorway. If he were to let in a tramp what would the butler say?

But thereupon Malcolm set his port-vent to his mouth, rapidly filled his bag, while the man stared as if it were a petard with which he was about to blow the door to shivers, and then sent from the instrument such a shriek, as it galloped off into the Lossie Gathering, that involuntarily his adversary pressed both hands to his ears. With a sudden application of his knee Malcolm sent the door wide, and entered the hall, with his pipes in full cry. The house resounded with their yell—but only for one moment. For down the stair, like bolt from catapult, came Demon, Florimel's huge Irish stag-hound, and springing on Malcolm, put an instant end to his music. The footman laughed with exultation, expecting to see him torn to pieces. But when instead he saw the fierce animal, a foot on each of his shoulders, licking Malcolm's face with long fiery tongue, he began to doubt.

"The dog knows you," he said sulkily.

"So shall you, before long," returned Malcolm. "Was it my fault that I made the mistake of looking for civility from you? One word to the dog, and he has you by the throat."

"I'll go and fetch Wallis," said the man, and closing the door, left the hall.

Now this Wallis had been a fellow-servant of Malcolm's at Lossie House, but he did not know that he had gone with Lady Bellair when she took Florimel away: almost everyone had left at the same time. He was now glad indeed to learn that there was one amongst the servants who knew him.

Wallis presently made his appearance, with a dish in his hands, on his way to the dining-room, from which came the confused noises of the feast.

"You'll be come up to wait on Lady Lossie," he said. "I haven't a moment to speak to you now, for we're at dinner, and there's a party."

"Never mind me. Give me that dish; I'll take it in: you can go for another," said Malcolm, laying his pipes in a safe spot.

"You can't go into the dining-room that figure," said Wallis, who was in the Bellair livery.

"This is how I waited on my lord," returned Malcolm, "and this is how I'll wait on my lady."

Wallis hesitated. But there was that about the fisher-fellow was too much for him. As he spoke, Malcolm took the dish from his hands, and with it walked into the dining-room.

There one reconnoitring glance was sufficient. The butler was at the sideboard opening a champagne bottle. He had cut wire and strings, and had his hand on the cork as Malcolm walked up to him. It was a critical moment, yet he stopped in the very article, and stared at the apparition.

"I'm Lady Lossie's man from Lossie House. I'll help you to wait," said Malcolm.

To the eyes of the butler he looked a savage. But there he was in the room with the dish in his hands, and speaking at least intelligibly; the cork of the champagne bottle was pushing hard against his palm, and he had no time to question. He peeped into Malcolm's dish.

"Take it round, then," he said. So Malcolm settled into the business of the hour.

It was some time, after he knew where she was, before he ventured to look at his sister: he would have her already familiarised with his presence before their eyes met. That crisis did not arrive during dinner.

Lord Liftore was one of the company, and so, to Malcolm's pleasure, for he felt in him an ally against the earl, was Florimel's mysterious friend.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A NEW LIVERY.

SCARCELY had the ladies gone to the drawing-room, when Florimel's maid, who knew Malcolm, came in quest of him. Lady Lossie desired to see him.

"What is the meaning of this, MacPhail?" she said, when he entered the room where she sat alone. "I did not send for you. Indeed, I thought you had been dismissed with the rest of the servants."

How differently she spoke! And she used to call him *Malcolm!* The girl Florimel was gone, and there sat—the marchioness, was it?—or some phase of riper womanhood only? It mattered little to Malcolm. He was no curious student of man or woman. He loved his kind too well to study it. But one thing seemed plain: she had forgotten the half friendship and whole service that had had place betwixt them, and it made him feel as if the soul of man no less than his life were but as a vapour that appeareth for a little and then vanisheth away.

But Florimel had not so entirely forgotten the past as Malcolm thought—not so entirely at least but that his appearance, and certain difficulties in which she had begun to find herself, brought something of it again to her mind.

"I thought," said Malcolm, assuming his best English, "your ladyship might not choose to part with an old servant at the will of a factor, and so took upon me to appeal to your ladyship to decide the question."

"But how is that? Did you not return to your fishing when the household was broken up?"

"No, my lady. Mr Crathie kept me to help Stoat, and do odd jobs about the place."

"And now he wants to discharge you?"

Then Malcolm told her the whole story, in which he gave such a description of Kelpie, that her owner, as she imagined herself, expressed a strong wish to see her; for Florimel was almost passionately fond of horses.

"You may soon do that, my lady," said Malcolm. "Mr Soutar, not being of the same mind as Mr Crathie, is going to send her up. It will be but the cost of the passage from Aberdeen, and she will fetch a better price here if your ladyship should resolve to part with her. She won't fetch the third of her value anywhere, though, on account of her bad temper and ugly tricks."

"But as to yourself, MacPhail—where are you going to go?" said Florimel. "I don't like to send you away, but, if I keep you, I don't know what to do with you. No doubt you could serve in the house, but that would not be suitable at all to your education and previous life."

"A body wad tak' you for a granny grown!" said Malcolm to himself. But to Florimel he replied—"If your ladyship should wish to keep Kelpie, you will have to keep me too, for not a creature else will she let near her."

"And pray tell me what use then can I make of such an animal," said Florimel.

"Your ladyship, I should imagine, will want a groom to attend you when you are out on horseback, and the groom will want a horse—and here am I and Kelpie!" answered Malcolm.

Florimel laughed.

"I see," she said. "You contrive I shall have a horse nobody can manage but yourself."

She rather liked the idea of a groom so mounted, and had too much well-justified faith in Malcolm to anticipate dangerous results.

"My lady," said Malcolm, appealing to her knowledge of his character to secure credit, for he was about to use his last means of persuasion, and as he spoke, in his eagerness he relapsed into his mother-tongue,—"My lady, did I ever tell ye a lee?"

"Certainly not, Malcolm, so far as I know. Indeed I am sure you never did," answered Florimel, looking up at him in a dominant yet kindly way.

"Then," continued Malcolm, "I'll tell your ladyship something you may find hard to believe, and yet is as true as that I loved your ladyship's father.—Your ladyship knows he had a kindness for me."

"I do know it," answered Florimel gently, moved by the tone of Malcolm's voice, and the expression of his countenance.

"Then I make bold to tell your ladyship that on his deathbed your father desired me to do my best for you—took my word that I would be your ladyship's true servant."

"Is it so, indeed, Malcolm?" returned Florimel, with a serious wonder in her tone, and looked him in the face with an earnest gaze. She had loved her father, and it sounded in her ears almost like a message from the tomb.

"It's as true as I stan' here, my leddy," said Malcolm.

Florimel was silent for a moment. Then she said,

"How is it that only now you come to tell me?"

"Your father never desired me to tell you, my lady—only he never imagined you would want to part with me, I suppose. But when you did not care to keep me, and never said a word to me when you went away, I could not tell how to do as I had promised him. It wasn't that one hour I forgot his wish, but that I feared to presume; for if I should displease your ladyship my chance was gone. So I kept about Lossie House as long as I could, hoping to see my way to some plan or other. But when at length Mr Crathie turned me away, what was I to do but come to your ladyship? And if your ladyship will let things be as before in the way of service, I mean—I canna doot, my leddy, but it'll be pleesant i' the sicht o' yer father, whanever he may come to ken o' 't, my lady."

Florimel gave him a strange, half-startled look. Hardly more than once since her father's funeral had she heard him alluded to, and now this fisher-lad spoke of him as if he were still at Lossie House.

Malcolm understood the look.

"Ye mean, my leddy—I ken what ye mean," he said. "I canna help it. For to lo'e onything is to ken't immortal. He's livin' to me, my lady."

Florimel continued staring, and still said nothing.

I sometimes think that the present belief in mortality is nothing but the almost universal although unsuspected unbelief in immortality grown vocal and articulate.

But Malcolm gathered courage and went on,

"An' what for no, my leddy?" he said, floundering no more in attempted English, but soaring on the clumsy wings of his mother-dialect. "Didna he turn his face to the licht afore he dee'd? an' him 'at rase frae the deid said 'at whaever believed in him sud never dee. Sae we maun believe 'at he's livin', for gien we dinna believe what *he* says, what *are* we to believe, my leddy?"

Florimel continued yet a moment looking him fixedly in the face. The thought did arise that perhaps he had lost his reason, but she could not look at him thus and even imagine it. She remembered how strange he had always been, and for a moment had a glimmering idea that in this young man's friendship she possessed an incorruptible treasure. The calm, truthful, believing, almost for the moment enthusiastic, expression of the young fisherman's face wrought upon her with a strangely quieting influence. It was as if one spoke to her out of a region of existence of which she had never even heard, but in whose reality she was compelled to believe because of the sound of the voice that came from it.

Malcolm seldom made the mistake of stamping into the earth any seeds of truth he might cast on it: he knew when to say no more, and for a time neither spoke. But now for all the coolness of her upper crust, Lady Florimel's heart glowed—not indeed with the power of the shining truth Malcolm had uttered, but with the light of gladness in the possession of such a strong, devoted, disinterested squire.

"I wish you to understand," she said at length, "that I am not at present mistress of this house, although it belongs to me. I am but the guest of Lady Bellair, who has rented it of my guardians. I cannot therefore arrange for you to be here. But you can find accommodation in the neighbourhood, and come to me every day for orders. Let me know when your mare arrives: I shall not want you till then. You will find room for her in the stables. You had better consult the butler about your groom's-livery."

Malcolm was astonished at the womanly sufficiency with which she gave her orders. He left her with the gladness of one who has had his righteous desire, held consultation with the butler on the matter of the livery, and went home to his lodging. There he sat down and meditated.

A strange new yearning pity rose in his heart as he thought about his sister and the sad facts of her lonely condition. He feared much that her stately composure was built mainly on her imagined position in society, and was not the outcome of her character. Would it be cruelty to destroy that false foundation, hardly the more false as a foundation for composure that beneath it lay a mistake?—or was it not rather a justice which her deeper and truer self had a right to demand of him? At present, however, he need not attempt to answer the question. Communication even such as a trusted groom might have with her, and familiarity with her surroundings, would probably reveal much. Meantime it was enough that he would now be so near her that no important change of which others might be aware, could well approach her without his knowledge, or anything take place without his being able to interfere if necessary.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### TWO CONVERSATIONS.

The next day Wallis came to see Malcolm and take him to the tailor's. They talked about the guests of the previous evening.

"There's a great change on Lord Meikleham," said Malcolm.

"There is that," said Wallis. "I consider him much improved. But you see he's succeeded; he's the earl now, and Lord Liftore —and a menseful, broad-shouldered man to the boot of the bargain. He used to be such a windle-straw!"

In order to speak good English, Wallis now and then, like some Scotch people of better education, anglicized a word ludicrously.

"Is there no news of his marriage?" asked Malcolm; adding, "they say he has great property."

"My love she's but a lassie yet," said Wallis, "—though she too has changed quite as much as my lord."

"Who are you speaking of?" asked Malcolm, anxious to hear the talk of the household on the matter.

"Why, Lady Lossie, of course. Anybody with half an eye can see as much as that."

"Is it settled then?"

"That would be hard to say. Her ladyship is too like her father: no one can tell what may be her mind the next minute. But, as I say, she's young, and ought to have her fling first—so far, that is, as we can permit it to a woman of her rank. Still, as I say, anybody with half an eye can see the end of it all: he's for ever hovering about her. My lady, too, has set her mind on it, and for my part I can't see what better she can do. I must say I approve of the match. I can see no possible objection to it."

"We used to think he drank too much," suggested Malcolm.

"Claret," said Wallis, in a tone that seemed to imply no one could drink too much of that.

"No, not claret only. I've seen the whisky follow the claret."

"Well, he don't now—not whisky at least. He don't drink too much—not much too much—not more than a gentleman should. He don't look like it—does he now? A good wife, such as my Lady Lossie will make him, will soon set him all right. I think of taking a similar protection myself, one of these days."

"He is not worthy of her," said Malcolm.

"Well, I confess his family won't compare with hers. There's a grandfather in it somewhere that was a banker or a brewer or a soap-boiler, or something of the sort, and she and her people have been earls and marquises ever since they walked arm in arm out of the ark. But, bless you! all that's been changed since I came to town. So long as there's plenty of money and the mind to spend it, we have learned not to be exclusive. It's selfish that. It's not Christian. Everything lies in the mind to spend it though. Mrs Tredger—that's our lady's-maid—only this is a secret—says it's all settled—she knows it for certain fact—only there's nothing to be said about it yet—she's so young, you know."

"Who was the man that sat nearly opposite my lady, on the other side of the table?" asked Malcolm.

"I know who you mean. Didn't look as if he'd got any business there—not like the rest of them, did he? No, they never do. Odd and end sort of people like he is, never do look the right thing—let them try ever so hard. How can they when they ain't it? That's a fellow that's painting Lady Lossie's portrait! Why he should be asked to dinner for that, I'm sure I can't tell. He ain't paid for it in victuals, is he? I never saw such land-leapers let into Lossie House, *I* know! But London's an awful place. There's no such a thing as respect of persons here. Here you meet the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, any night in my lady's drawing-room. I declare to *you*, Mawlcolm MacPhail, it makes me quite uncomfortable at times to think who I may have been waiting upon without knowing it. For that painter fellow, Lenorme they call him, I could knock him on the teeth with the dish every time I hold it to him. And to see him stare at Lady Lossie as he does!"

"A painter must want to get a right good hold of the face he's got to paint," said Malcolm. "Is he here often?"

"He's been here five or six times already," answered Wallis, "and how many times more I may have to fill his glass, I don't know. *I* always give him second-best sherry, *I* know. I'm sure the time that pictur' 's been on hand! He ought to be ashamed of himself. If she's been once to his studio, she's been twenty times—to give him sittings as they call it. He's making a pretty penny of it, I'll be bound! I wonder he has the cheek to show himself when my lady treats him so haughtily. But those sort of people have no proper feelin's, you see: it's not to be expected of such."

Wallis liked the sound of his own sentences, and a great deal more talk of similar character followed before they got back from the tailor's. Malcolm was tired enough of him, and never felt the difference between man and man more strongly than when, after leaving him, he set out for a walk with Blue Peter, whom he found waiting him at his lodging. On this same Blue Peter, however, Wallis would have looked down from the height of his share of the marquisate as one of the lower orders—ignorant, vulgar, even dirty.

They had already gazed together upon not a few of the marvels of London, but nothing had hitherto moved or drawn them so much as the ordinary flow of the currents of life through the huge city. Upon Malcolm, however, this had now begun to pall, while Peter already found it worse than irksome, and longed for Scaurnose. At the same time loyalty to Malcolm kept him from uttering a whisper of his home-sickness. It was yet but the fourth day they had been in London.

"Eh, my lord!" said Blue Peter, when by chance they found themselves in the lull of a little quiet court, somewhere about Gray's Inn, with the roar of Holborn in their ears, "it's like a month sin' I was at the kirk. I'm feart the din's gotten into my heid, an' I'll never get it oot again. I cud maist wuss I was a mackerel, for they tell me the fish hears naething. I ken weel noo what ye meant, my lord, whan ye said ye dreidit the din micht gar ye forget yer Macker."

"I hae been wussin' sair mysel', this last twa days," responded Malcolm, "'at I cud get ae sicht o' the jaws clashin' upo' the Scaurnose, or rowin up upo' the edge o' the links. The din o' natur' never troubles the guid thouchts in ye. I reckon it's 'cause it's a kin' o' a harmony in 'tsel', an' a harmony's jist, as the maister used to say, a higher kin' o' a peace. Yon organ 'at we hearkent till ae day ootside the kirk, ye min'—man, it was a quaietness in 'tsel', and cam' throu' the din like a bonny silence—like a lull i' the win' o' this warl'! It wasna a din at a', but a gran' repose like. But this noise tumultuous o' human strife, this din' o' iron shune an' iron wheels, this whurr and whuzz o' buyin' an' sellin' an' gettin' gain—it disna help a body to their prayers."

"Eh, na, my lord! Jist think o' the preevilege—I never saw nor thoucht o' 't afore—o' haein' 't i' yer pooer, ony nicht 'at ye're no efter the fish, to stap oot at yer ain door, an' be in the mids o' the temple! Be 't licht or dark, be 't foul or fair, the sea sleepin' or ragin', ye ha'e aye room, an' naething atween ye an' the throne o' the Almichty, to the whilk yer prayers ken the gait, as weel 's the herrin' to the shores o' Scotlan': ye ha'e but to lat them flee, an' they gang straucht there. But here ye ha'e aye to luik sae gleg efter yer boady, 'at, as ye say, my lord, yer sowl's like to come aff the waur, gien it binna clean forgotten."

"I doobt there's something no richt aboot it, Peter," returned Malcolm.

"There maun be a heap no richt aboot it," answered Peter.

"Ay, but I'm no meanin' 't jist as ye du. I had the haill thing throu' my heid last nicht, an' I canna but think there's something wrang wi' a man gien he canna hear the word o' God as weel i' the mids o' a multitude no man can number, a' made ilk ane i' the image o' the Father—as weel, I say, as i' the hert o' win' an' watter an' the lift an' the starns an' a'. Ye canna say 'at thae things are a' made i' the image o' God, in the same w'y, at least, 'at ye can say 't o' the body an' face o' a man, for throu' them the God o' the whole earth revealed Himsel' in Christ."

"Ow, weel, I wad alloo what ye say, gien they war a' to be considered Christi-ans."

"Ow, I grant we canna weel du that i' the full sense, but I doobt, gien they bena a' Christi-ans 'at ca's themsel's that, there's a heap mair Christi-anity nor get's the credit o' its ain name. I min' weel hoo Maister Graham said to me ance 'at hoo there was something o' Him 'at made him luikin' oot o' the een o' ilka man 'at he had made; an' what wad ye ca' that but a scart or a straik o' Christi-anity."

"Weel, I kenna; but ony gait I canna think it can be again' the trowth o' the gospel to wuss yersel' mair alane wi' yer God nor ye ever can be in sic an awfu' Babylon o' a place as this."

"Na, na, Peter; I'm no sayin' that. I ken weel we're to gang intill the closet, and shut to the door. I'm only afeart 'at there be something wrang in mysel' 'at tak's t' ill to be amon' sae mony neibors. I'm thinkin' 'at, gien a' was richt 'ithin me, gien I lo'ed my neibor as the Lord wad hae them 'at lo'ed Him lo'e ilk ane his brither, I micht be better able to pray amang them—ay, i' the verra face o' the bargainin' an' leein' a' aboot me."

"An' min' ye," said Peter, pursuing the train of his own thoughts, and heedless of Malcolm's, "'at oor Lord himsel' bude whiles to win awa', even frae his dissiples, to be him-lane wi' the Father o' 'im."

"Ay, ye're richt there, Peter," answered Malcolm, "but there's ae p'int in 't ye maunna forget—and that is 'at it was never i' the day-time—sae far's I min'—'at he did sae. The lee-lang day he was among 's fowk—workin' his michty wark. Whan the nicht cam', in which no man could wark, he gaed hame till 's Father, as 't war. Eh me! but it's weel to ha'e a man like the schuilmaister to put trowth intill ye. I kenna what comes o' them 'at ha'e drucken maisters, or sic as cares for naething but coontin' an' Laitin, an' the likes o' that!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### FLORIMEL.

THAT night Florimel had her thoughts as well as Malcolm. Already life was not what it had been to her, and the feeling of a difference is often what sets one a thinking first. While her father lived, and the sureness of his love over-arched her consciousness with a heaven of safety, the physical harmony of her nature had supplied her with a more than sufficient sense of well-being. Since his death, too, there had been times when she even fancied an enlargement of life in the sense of freedom and power which came with the knowledge of being a great lady, possessed of the rare privilege of an ancient title and an inheritance which seemed to her a yet greater wealth than it was. But she had soon found that, as to freedom, she had less of that than before—less of the feeling of it within her: not much freedom of any sort is to be had without fighting for it, and she had yet to discover that the only freedom worth the name—that of heart, and soul, and mind—is not to be gained except through the hardest of battles. She was very lonely, too. Lady Bellair had never assumed with her any authority, and had always been kind even to petting, but there was nothing about her to make a home for the girl's heart. She felt in her no superiority, and for a spiritual home that is essential. As she learned to know her better, this sense of loneliness went on deepening, for she felt more and more that her guardian was not one in whom she could place genuine confidence, while yet her power over her was greater than she knew. The innocent nature of the girl had begun to recoil from what she saw in the woman of the world, and yet she had in herself worldliness enough to render her fully susceptible of her influences.

Notwithstanding her fine health and natural spirits, Florimel had begun to know what it is to wake suddenly of a morning between three and four, and lie for a long weary time, sleepless. In youth bodily fatigue ensures falling asleep, but as soon as the body is tolerably rested, if there be unrest in the mind, that wakes it, and consciousness returns in the shape of a dull misgiving like the far echo of the approaching trump of the archangel. Indeed, those hours are as a vestibule to the great hall of judgment, and to such as, without rendering it absolute obedience, yet care to keep on some sort of terms with their conscience, is a time of anything but comfort. Nor does the court in those hours sitting, concern itself only with heavy questions of right or wrong, but whoever loves and cares himself for his appearance before the eyes of men, finds himself accused of paltry follies, stupidities, and indiscretions, and punished with paltry mortifications, chagrins, and anxieties. From such arraignment no man is free but him who walks in the perfect law of liberty—that is, the will of the Perfect—which alone is peace.

On the morning after she had thus taken Malcolm again into her service, Florimel had one of these experiences—a foretaste of the Valley of the Shadow: she awoke in the hour when judgment sits upon the hearts of men. Or is it not rather the hour for which a legion of gracious spirits are on the watch—when, fresh raised from the death of sleep, cleansed a little from the past and its evils by the gift of God, the heart and brain are most capable of their influences?—the hour when, besides, there is no refuge of external things wherein the man may shelter himself from the truths they would so gladly send conquering into the citadel of his nature,—no world of the senses to rampart the soul from thought, when the eye and the ear are as if they were not, and the soul lies naked before the infinite of reality. This live hour of the morning is the most real hour of the day, the hour of the motions of a prisoned and persecuted life, of its effort to break through and breathe. A good man then finds his refuge in the heart of the Purifying Fire; the bad man curses the swarms of Beelzebub that settle upon every sore spot in his conscious being.

But it was not the general sense of unfitness in the conditions of her life, neither was it dissatisfaction with Lady Bellair, or the want of the pressure of authority upon her unstable being; it was not the sense of loneliness and unshelteredness in the sterile waste of fashionable life, neither was it weariness with the same and its shows, or all these things together, that could have waked the youth of Florimel and kept it awake at this hour of the night—for night that hour is, however near the morning.

Some few weeks agone, she had accompanied to the study of a certain painter, a friend who was then sitting to him for her portrait. The moment she entered, the appearance of the man and his surroundings laid hold of her imagination Although on the very verge of popularity, he was young—not more than five-and-twenty. His face, far from what is called handsome, had a certain almost grandeur in it, owed mainly to the dominant forehead, and the regnant life in the eyes. To this the rest of the countenance was submissive. The mouth was sweet yet strong, seeming to derive its strength from the will that towered above and overhung it, throned on the crags of those eyebrows. The nose was rather short, not unpleasantly so, and had mass enough. In figure he was scarcely above the usual height, but well formed. To a first glance even, the careless yet graceful freedom of his movements was remarkable, while his address was manly, and altogether devoid of self-recommendation. Confident modesty and unobtrusive ease distinguished his demeanour. His father, Arnold Lenorme, descended from an old Norman family, had given him the Christian name of Raoul, which, although outlandish, tolerably fitted the surname, notwithstanding the contiguous *l*'s, objectionable to the fastidious ear of their owner. The earlier and more important part of his education, the beginnings, namely, of everything he afterwards further followed, his mother herself gave him, partly because she was both poor and capable, and partly because she was more anxious than most mothers for his best welfare. The poverty they had crept through, as those that strive after better things always will, one way or another, with immeasurable advantage, and before the time came when he must leave home, her influence had armed him in adamant—a service which alas! few mothers seem capable of rendering the knights whom they send out into the battle-field of the world. Most of them give their children the best they have; but how shall a foolish woman ever be a wise mother? The result in his case was, that reverence for her as the type of womanhood, working along with a natural instinct for refinement, a keen feeling of the incompatibility with art of anything in itself low or unclean, and a healthful and successful activity of mind, had rendered him so far upright and honourable that he had never yet done that in one mood which in another he had looked back upon with loathing. As yet he had withstood the temptations belonging to his youth and his profession—in great measure also the temptations belonging to success; he had not yet been tried with disappointment, or sorrow, or failure.

As to the environment in which Florimel found him, it was to her a region of confused and broken colour and form—a kind of chaos out of which beauty was ever ready to start. Pictures stood on easels, leaned against chair-backs, glowed from the wall—each contributing to the atmosphere of solved rainbow that seemed to fill the space. Lenorme was seated—not at his easel, but at a grand piano, which stood away, half-hidden in a corner, as if it knew itself there on sufferance, with pictures all about the legs of it. For they had walked straight in without giving his servant time to announce them. A bar of a song, in a fine tenor voice, broke as they opened the door; and the painter came to meet them from the farther end of the study. He shook hands with Florimel's friend, and turned with a bow to her. At the first glance the eyes of both fell. Raised the same instant, they encountered each other point blank, and then the eloquent blood had its turn at betrayal. What the moment meant, Florimel did not understand; but it seemed as if Raoul and she had met somewhere long ago, were presumed not to know it, but could not help remembering it, and agreeing to recognise it as a fact. A strange pleasure filled her heart. While Mrs Barnardiston sat she flitted about the room like a butterfly, looking at one thing after another, and asking now the most ignorant, now the most penetrative question, disturbing not a little the work, but sweetening the temper of the painter, as he went on with his study of the mask and helmet into which the Gorgon stare of the Unideal had petrified the face and head of his sitter. He found the situation trying nevertheless. It was as if Cupid had been set by Jupiter to take a portrait of Io in her stall, while evermore he heard his Psyche fluttering about among the peacocks in the yard. For the girl had bewitched him at first sight. He thought it was only as an artist, though to be sure a certain throb, almost of pain, in the region of the heart, when first his eyes fell before hers, might have warned, and perhaps did in vain warn him otherwise. Sooner than usual he professed himself content with the sitting, and then proceeded to show the ladies some of his sketches and pictures. Florimel asked to see one standing as in disgrace with its front to the wall. He put it, half reluctantly, on an easel, and said it was meant for the unveiling of Isis, as presented in a mährchen of Novalis, introduced in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, in which the goddess of Nature reveals to the eager and anxious gaze of the beholder the person of his Rosenblûthchen, whom he had left behind him when he set out to visit the temple of the divinity. But on the great pedestal where should have sat the goddess there was no gracious form visible. That part of the picture was a blank. The youth stood below, gazing enraptured with parted lips and outstretched arms, as if he had already begun to suspect what had begun to dawn through the slowly thinning veil—but to the eye of the beholder he gazed as yet only on vacancy, and the picture had not reached an attempt at self-explanation. Florimel asked why he had left it so long unfinished, for the dust was thick on the back of the canvas.

"Because I have never seen the face or figure," the painter answered, "either in eye of mind or of body, that claimed the position."

As he spoke, his eyes seemed to Florimel to lighten strangely, and as if by common consent they turned away, and looked at something else. Presently Mrs Barnardiston, who cared more for sound than form or colour, because she could herself sing a little, began to glance over some music on the piano, curious to find what the young man had been singing, whereupon Lenorme said to Florimel hurriedly, and almost in a whisper, with a sort of hesitating assurance,

"If *you* would give me a sitting or two—I know I am presumptuous, but if you would—I—I should send the picture to the Academy in a week."

"I will," replied Florimel, flushing like a wild poppy, and as she said it, she looked up in his face and smiled.

"It would have been selfish," she said to herself as they drove away, "to refuse him."

This first interview, and all the interviews that had followed, now passed through her mind as she lay awake in the darkness preceding the dawn, and she reviewed them not without self-reproach. But for some of my readers it will be hard to believe that one of the feelings that now tormented the girl was a sense of lowered dignity because of the relation in which she stood to the painter—seeing there was little or no ground for moral compunction, and the feeling had its root merely in the fact that he was a painter fellow, and she a marchioness. Her rank had already grown to seem to her so identified with herself that she was hardly any longer capable of the analysis that should show it distinct from her being. As to any *duty* arising from her position, she had never heard the word used except as representing something owing to, not owed by rank. Social standing in the eyes of the super-excellent few of fashion was the Satan of unrighteousness worshipped around her. And the precepts of this worship fell upon soil prepared for it. For with all the simplicity of her nature, there was in it an inborn sense of rank, of elevation in the order of the universe above most others of the children of men—of greater intrinsic worth therefore in herself. How could it be otherwise with the offspring of generations of pride and falsely conscious superiority. Hence, as things were going now with the mere human part of her, some commotion, if not earthquake indeed, was imminent. Nay the commotion had already begun, as manifest in her sleeplessness and the thoughts that occupied it.

Rightly to understand the sense of shame and degradation she had not unfrequently felt of late, we must remember that in the circle in which she moved she heard professions, arts, and trades alluded to with the same unuttered, but the more strongly implied contempt—a contempt indeed regarded as so much a matter of course, so thoroughly understood, so reasonable in its nature, so absolute in its degree, that to utter it would have been bad taste from very superfluity. Yet she never entered the painter's study but with trembling heart, uncertain foot, and fluttering breath, as of one stepping within the gates of an enchanted paradise, whose joy is too much for the material weight of humanity to ballast even to the steadying of the bodily step, and the outward calm of the bodily carriage. How far things had gone between them we shall be able to judge by-and-by; it will be enough at present to add that it was this relation and the inward strife arising from it that had not only prematurely, but over-rapidly ripened the girl into the woman.

This my disclosure of her condition, however, has not yet uncovered the sorest spot upon which the flies of Beelzebub settled in the darkness of this torture-hour of the human clock. Although still the same lively, self-operative nature she had been in other circumstances, she was so far from being insensible or indifferent to the opinions of others, that she had not even strength enough to keep a foreign will off the beam of her choice: the will of another, in no way directly brought to bear on hers, would yet weigh to her encouragement where her wish was doubtful, or to her restraint where impulse was strong; it would even move her towards a line of conduct whose anticipated results were distasteful to her. Ever and anon her pride would rise armed against the consciousness of slavery, but its armour was too weak either for defence or for deliverance. She knew that the heart of Lady Bellair, what of heart she had, was set upon her marriage with her nephew, Lord Liftore. Now she recoiled from the idea of marriage, and dismissed it into a future of indefinite removal; she had no special desire to please Lady Bellair from the point of gratitude, for she was perfectly aware that her relation to herself was far from being without advantage to that lady's position as well as means: a whisper or two that had reached her had been enough to enlighten her in that direction; neither could she persuade herself that Lord Liftore was at all the sort of man she could become proud of as a husband; and yet she felt destined to be his wife. On the other hand she had no dislike to him: he was handsome, well-informed, capable—a gentleman, she thought, of good regard in the circles in which they moved, and one who would not in any manner disgrace her, although to be sure he was her inferior in rank, and she would rather have married a duke. At the same time, to confess all the truth, she was by no means indifferent to the advantages of having for a husband a man with money enough to restore the somewhat tarnished prestige of her own family to its pristine brilliancy. She had never said a word to encourage the scheming of Lady Bellair; neither, on the other hand, had she ever said a word to discourage her hopes, or give her ground for doubting the acceptableness of her cherished project. Hence Lady Bellair had naturally come to regard the two as almost affianced. But Florimel's aversion to the idea of marriage, and her horror at the thought of the slightest whisper of what was between her and Lenorme, increased together.

There were times too when she asked herself in anxious discomfort whether she was not possibly a transgressor against a deeper and simpler law than that of station—whether she was altogether maidenly in the encouragement she had given and was giving to the painter. It must not be imagined that she had once visited him without a companion, though that companion was indeed sometimes only her maid—her real object being covered by the true pretext of sitting for her portrait, which Lady Bellair pleased herself with imagining would one day be presented to Lord Liftore. But she could not, upon such occasions of morning judgment as this, fail to doubt sorely whether the visits she paid him, and the liberties which upon fortunate occasions she allowed him, were such as could be justified on any ground other than that she was prepared to give him all. All, however, she was by no means prepared to give him: that involved consequences far too terrible to be contemplated even as possibilities.

With such causes for disquiet in her young heart and brain, it is not then wonderful that she should sometimes be unable to slip across this troubled region of the night in the boat of her dreams, but should suffer shipwreck on the waking coast, and have to encounter the staring and questioning eyes of more than one importunate truth. Nor is it any wonder either that, to such an inexperienced and so troubled a heart, the assurance of one absolutely devoted friend should come with healing and hope—even if that friend should be but a groom, altogether incapable of understanding her position, or perceiving the phantoms that crowded about her, threatening to embody themselves in her ruin. A clumsy, ridiculous fellow, she said to herself, from whose person she could never dissociate the smell of fish, who talked a horrible jargon called Scotch, and who could not be prevented from uttering unpalatable truths at uncomfortable moments ; yet whose thoughts were as chivalrous as his person was powerful, and whose countenance was pleasing if only for the triumph of honesty therein : she actually felt stronger and safer to know he was near, and at her beck and call.

## CHAPTER XV.

### PORTLOSSIE.

MR CRATHIE, seeing nothing more of Malcolm, believed himself at last well rid of him ; but it was days before his wrath ceased to flame, and then it went on smouldering. Nothing occurred to take him to the Seaton, and no business brought any of the fisher people to his office during that time. Hence he heard nothing of the mode of Malcolm's departure. When at length in the course of ordinary undulatory propagation the news reached him that Malcolm had taken the yacht with him, he was enraged beyond measure at the impudence of the theft, as he called it, and ran to the Seaton in a fury. He had this consolation, however: the man who had accused him of dishonesty and hypocrisy had proved but a thief.

He found the boat-house indeed empty, and went storming from cottage to cottage, but came upon no one from whom his anger could draw nourishment, not to say gain satisfaction. At length he reached the Partan's, found him at home, and commenced, at hap-hazard, abusing him as an aider and abettor of the felony. But Meg Partan was at home also, as Mr Crathie soon learned to his cost ; for, hearing him usurp her unique privilege of falling out upon her husband, she stole from the ben-end, and having stood for a moment silent in the doorway, listening for comprehenson, rushed out in a storm of tongue.

"An' what for sudna my man," she cried, at full height of her screeching voice, "lay tu his han' wi' ither honest fowk to du for the boat what him 'at was weel kent for the captain o' her, sin' ever she was a boat, wantit dune? Wad ye tak the comman' o' the boat, sir, as weel's o' a' thing ither aboot the place?"

"Hold your tongue, woman," said the factor; "I have nothing to say to you."

"Aigh, sirs! but it's a peety ye wasna foreordeent to be markis yersel'! It maun be a sair vex to ye 'at ye're naething but the factor."

"If ye don't mind your manners, Mistress Fin'lay," said Mr Crathie in glowing indignation, "perhaps you'll find that the factor is as much as the marquis, when he's all there is for one."

"Lord safe 's! hear till 'im!" cried the Partaness. "Wha wad hae thoucht it o' 'im? There's fowk 'at it sets weel to tak upo' them! His father, honest man, wad ne'er hae spoken like that to Meg Partan; but syne he *was* an honest man, though he was but the heid-shepherd upo' the estate. Man, I micht hae been yer mither—gien I had been auld eneuch for 's first wife, for he wad fain hae had me for 's second."

"I've a great mind to take out a warrant against you, John Fin'lay, otherwise called the Partan, as airt an' pairt in the stealing of the Marchioness of Lossie's pleasure-boat," said the factor. "And for you, Mistress Fin'lay, I would have you please to remember that this house, as far at least as you are concerned, is mine, although I am but the factor, and not the marquis; and if you don't keep that unruly tongue of yours a little quieter in your head, I'll set you in the street the next quarter day but one, as sure's ever you gutted a herring, and then you may bid good-bye to Portlossie, for there's not a house, as you very well know, in all the Seaton, that belongs to another than her ladyship."

"'Deed, Mr Crathie," returned Meg Partan, a little sobered by the threat, "ye wad hae mair sense nor rin the risk o' an uprisin' o' the fisher-fowk. They wad ill stan' to see my auld man an' me misused, no to say 'at her leddyship hersel' wad see ony o' her ain fowk turned oot o' hoose an' haudin' for naething ava."

"Her ladyship wad gi'e hersel' sma' concern gien the haill bilin' o' ye war whaur ye cam frae," returned the factor. "An' for the toon here, the fowk kens the guid o' a quaiet caus'ay ower weel to lament the loss o' ye."

"The deil's i' the man!" cried the Partaness in high scorn. "He wad threip upo' me 'at I was ane o thae lang-tongued limmers 'at maks themsel's h'ard frae ae toon's en' to the tither! But I s' gar him priv 's words yet!"

"Ye see, sir," interposed the mild Partan, anxious to shove extremities aside, "we didna ken 'at there was onything intill't by ord'nar. Gien we had but kent 'at he was oot o' your guid graces,——"

"Haud yer tongue afore ye lee, man," interrupted his wife. "Ye ken weel eneuch ye wad du what Ma'colm MacPhail wad hae ye du, for ony factor in braid Scotlan'."

"You *must* have known," said the factor to the Partan, apparently heedless of this last outbreak of the generous evil temper, and laying a cunning trap for the information he sorely wanted, but had as yet failed in procuring—"else why was it that not a soul went with him? He could ill manage the boat alone."

"What put sic buff an' styte i' yer heid, sir?" rejoined Meg, defiant of the hints her husband sought to convey to her. "There's mony ane wad hae been ready to gang, only wha sud gang but him 'at gaed wi' him an' 's lordship frae the first?"

"And who was that?" asked Mr Crathie.

"Ow! wha but Blue Peter?" answered Meg.

"Hm!" said the factor, in a tone that for almost the first time in her life made the woman regret that she had spoken, and therewith he rose and left the cottage.

"Eh, mither!" cried Lizzy, in her turn appearing from the ben-end, with her child in her arms, "ye hae wroucht ruin i' the earth! He'll hae Peter an' Annie an' a' oot o' hoose an' ha', come midsummer."

"I daur him till't!" cried her mother, in the impotence and self-despite of a mortifying blunder; "I'll raise the toon upon 'im."

"What wad that du, mither?" returned Lizzy, in distress about her friends. "It wad but mak' ill waur.

"An' wha are ye to oppen yer mou' sae wide to yer mither?" burst forth Meg Partan, glad of an object upon which the chagrin that consumed her might issue in flame. "Ye ha'ena luikit to yer ain gait sae weel 'at ye can thriep to set richt them 'at broucht ye forth.—Wha are ye, I say?" she repeated in rage.

"Ane 'at folly's made wiser, maybe, mither," answered Lizzie sadly, and proceeded to take her shawl from behind the door· she would go to her friends at Scaurnose, and communicate her fears for their warning. But her words smote the mother within the mother, and she turned and looked at her daughter with more of the woman and less of the Partan in her rugged countenance than had been visible there since the first week of her married life. She had been greatly injured by the gaining of too easy a conquest and resultant supremacy over her husband, whence she had ever after revelled in a rule too absolute for good to any concerned. As she was turning away, her daughter caught a glimpse of her softened eyes, and went out of the house with more comfort in her heart than she had felt ever since first she had given her conscience cause to speak daggers to her.

The factor kept raging to himself all the way home, flung himself trembling on his horse, vouchsafing his anxious wife scarce any answer to her anxious enquiries, and galloped to Duff Harbour to Mr Soutar.

I will not occupy my tale with their interview. Suffice it to say that the lawyer succeeded at last in convincing the demented factor that it would be but prudent to delay measures for the recovery of the yacht and the arrest and punishment of its abductors, until he knew what Lady Lossie would say to the affair. She had always had a liking for the lad, Mr Soutar said, and he would not be in the least surprised to hear that Malcolm had gone straight to her ladyship and put himself under her protection. No doubt by this time the cutter was at its owner's disposal: it would be just like the fellow! He always went the nearest road anywhere. And to prosecute him for a thief would in any case but bring down the ridicule of the whole coast upon the factor, and breed him endless annoyance in the getting in of his rents—especially among the fishermen. The result was that Mr Crathie went home—not indeed a humbler or wiser man than he had gone, but a thwarted man, and therefore the more dangerous in the channels left open to the outrush of his angry power.

When Lizzy reached Scaurnose, her account of the factor's behaviour, to her surprise, did not take much effect upon Mrs Mair: a queer little smile broke over her countenance, and vanished. An enforced gravity succeeded, however, and she began to take counsel with Lizzy as to what they could do, or where they could go, should the worst come to the worst, and the doors, not only of her own house, but of Scaurnose and Portlossie as well, be shut against them. But through it all reigned a calm regard and fearlessness of the future which, to Lizzy's roused and apprehensive imagination, was strangely inexplicable. Annie Mair seemed possessed of some hidden and upholding assurance that raised her above the fear of man or what he could do to her. The girl concluded it must be the knowledge of God, and prayed more earnestly that night than she had prayed since the night on which Malcolm had talked to her so earnestly before he left. I must add this much, that she was not altogether astray: God was in Malcolm, giving new hope to his fisher-folk.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### ST JAMES THE APOSTLE.

WHEN Malcolm left his sister, he had a dim sense of having lapsed into Scotch, and set about buttressing and strengthening his determination to get rid of all unconscious and unintended use of the northern dialect, not only that, in his attendance upon Florimel, he might be neither offensive nor ridiculous, but that, when the time should come in which he must appear what he was, it might be less of an annoyance to her to yield the marquisate to one who could speak like a gentleman and one of the family. But not the less did he love the tongue he had spoken from his childhood, and in which were on record so many precious ballads and songs, old and new; and he resolved that, when he came out as a marquis, he would at Lossie House indemnify himself for the constraint of London. He would not have an English servant there except Mrs Courthope: he would not have the natural country speech corrupted with cockneyisms, and his people taught to speak like Wallis! To his old friends the fishers and their families, he would never utter a sentence but in the old tongue, haunted with all the memories of relations that were never to be obliterated or forgotten, its very tones reminding him and them of hardships together endured, pleasures shared, and help willingly given. At night, notwithstanding, he found that in talking with Blue Peter, he had forgotten all about his resolve, and it vexed him with himself not a little. He now saw that if he could but get into the way of speaking English to *him*, the victory would be gained, for with no one else would he find any difficulty then.

The next morning he went down to the stairs at London Bridge, and took a boat to the yacht. He had to cross several vessels to reach it. When at length he looked down from the last of them on the deck of the little cutter, he saw Blue Peter sitting on the coamings of the hatch, his feet hanging down within. He was lost in the book he was reading. Curious to see, without disturbing him, what it was that so absorbed him, Malcolm dropped quietly on the tiller, and thence on the deck, and approaching softly peeped over his shoulder. He was reading the epistle of James the apostle. Malcolm fell a-thinking. From Peter's thumbed bible his eyes went wandering through the thicket of masts, in which moved so many busy seafarers, and then turned to the docks and wharfs and huge warehouses lining the shores; and while they scanned the marvellous vision, the thoughts that arose and passed through his brain were like these: "What are ye duin' here, Jeames the Just? Ye was naething but a fisher-body upon a sma' watter i' the hert o' the hills, 'at wasna even saut; an' what can the thochts that gaed throu' your fish-catchin' brain hae to du wi' sic a sicht 's this? I won'er gien at this moment there be anither man in a' Lon'on sittin' readin' that epis-tle o' yours but Blue Peter here? *He* thinks there's naething o' mair importance, 'cep' maybe some ither pairts o' the same buik; but syne he's but a puir fisher-body himsel', an' what kens he o' the wisdom an' riches an' pooer o' this michty queen o' the nations, thron't aboot him?—Is't possible the auld body kent something 'at was jist as necessar' to ilka man, the busiest in this croodit mairt, to ken an' gang by, as it was to Jeames an' the lave o' the michty apostles themsel's? For me, I dinna doobt it—but hoo it sud ever be onything but an auld-warld story to the new warld o' Lon'on, I think it wad bleck Maister Graham himsel' til imaigine."

Before this, Blue Peter had become aware that some one was near him, but, intent on the words of his brother fisher of the old time, had half-unconsciously put off looking up to see who was behind him. When now he did so, and saw Malcolm, he rose and touched his bonnet.

"It was jist i' my heid, my lord," he said, without any preamble, "sic a kin' o' a h'avenly Jacobin as this same Jacobus was! He's sic a leveller as was feow afore 'im, I doobt, wi' his gowd-ringt man, an' his cloot-cled brither! He pat me in twa min's, my lord, whan I got up, whether I wad touch my bonnet to yer lordship or no."

Malcolm laughed with hearty appreciation.

"When I am king of Lossie," he said, "be it known to all whom it may concern, that it is and shall be the right of Blue Peter, and all his descendants, to the end of time, to stand with bonneted heads in the presence of Lord or—no, not Lady, Peter—of the house of Lossie."

"Ay, but ye see, Ma'colm," said Peter, forgetting his address, and his eye twinkling in the humour of the moment, "it's no by your leave, or ony man's leave; it's the richt o' the thing; an' that I maun think aboot, an' see whether I be at leeberty to ca' ye *my lord* or no."

"Meantime, don't do it," said Malcolm, "least you should have to change afterwards. You might find it difficult."

"Ye're cheengt a'ready," said Blue Peter, looking up at him sharply. "I ne'er h'ard ye speyk like that afore."

"Make nothing of it," returned Malcolm. "I am only airing my English on you. I have made up my mind to learn to speak in London as London people do, and so, even to you, in the meantime only, I am going to speak as good English as I can.—It's nothing between you and me, Peter and you must not mind it," he added, seeing a slight cloud come over the fisherman's face.

Blue Peter turned away with a sigh. The sounds of English speech from the lips of Malcolm addressed to himself, seemed vaguely to indicate the opening of a gulf between them, destined ere long to widen to the whole social width between a fisherman and a marquis, swallowing up in it not only all old memories, but all later friendship and confidence. A shadow of bitterness crossed the poor fellow's mind, and in it the seed of distrust began to strike root, and all because a newer had been substituted for an older form of the same speech and language. Truly man's heart is a delicate piece of work, and takes gentle handling or hurt. But that the pain was not all of innocence is revealed in the strange fact, afterwards disclosed by the repentant Peter himself, that, in that same moment, what had just passed his mouth as a joke, put on an important, serious look, and appeared to involve a matter of doubtful duty: was it really right of one man to say *my lord* to another? Thus the fisherman, and not the marquis, was the first to sin against the other because of altered fortune. Distrust awoke pride in the heart of Blue Peter, and he erred in the lack of the charity that thinketh no evil.

But the lack and the doubt made little show as yet. The two men rowed in the dinghy down the river to the Aberdeen wharf to make arrangements about Kelpie, whose arrival Malcolm expected the following Monday, then dined together, and after that had a long row up the river.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A DIFFERENCE.

NOTWITHSTANDING his keenness of judgment and sobriety in action, Malcolm had yet a certain love for effect, a delight, that is, in the show of concentrated results, which, as I believe I have elsewhere remarked, belongs especially to the Celtic nature, and is one form in which the poetic element vaguely embodies itself. Hence arose the temptation to try on Blue Peter the effect of a literally theatrical surprise. He knew well the prejudices of the greater portion of the Scots people against every possible form of artistic, most of all, dramatic representation. He knew, therefore, also, that Peter would never be persuaded to go with him to the theatre: to invite him would be like asking him to call upon Beelzebub; but as this feeling was cherished in utter ignorance of its object, he judged he would be doing him no wrong if he made experiment how the thing itself would affect the heart and judgment of the unsophisticated fisherman.

Finding that *The Tempest* was still the play represented, he contrived, as they walked together, so to direct their course that they should be near Drury Lane towards the hour of commencement. He did not want to take him in much before the time: he would not give him scope for thought, doubt, suspicion, discovery.

When they came in front of the theatre, people were crowding in, and carriages setting down their occupants. Blue Peter gave a glance at the building.

"This'll be ane o' the Lon'on kirks, I'm thinkin'?" he said. "It's a muckle place; an' there maun be a heap o' guid fowk in Lon'on, for as ill's it's ca'd, to see sae mony, an' i' their cairritches, comin' to the kirk—on a Setterday nicht tu. It maun be some kin' o' a prayer-meetin', I'm thinkin'."

Malcolm said nothing, but led the way to the pit entrance.

"That's no an ill w'y o' getherin' the baubees," said Peter, seeing how the in-comers paid their money. "I hae h'ard o' the plate bein' robbit in a muckle toon afore noo."

When at length they were seated, and he had time to glance reverently around him, he was a little staggered at sight of the decorations; and the thought crossed his mind of the pictures and statues he had heard of in catholic churches; but he remembered Westminster Abbey, its windows and monuments, and returned to his belief that he was, if in an episcopal, yet in a protestant church. But he could not help the thought that the galleries were a little too gaudily painted, while the high pews in them astonished him. Peter's nature, however, was one of those calm, slow ones which, when occupied by an idea or a belief, are by no means ready to doubt its correctness, and are even ingenious in reducing all apparent contradictions to theoretic harmony with it—whence it came that to him all this was only part of the church furniture according to the taste and magnificence of London. He sat quite tranquil, therefore, until the curtain rose, revealing the ship's company in all the confusion of the wildest of sea storms.

Malcolm watched him narrowly. But Peter was first so taken by surprise, and then so carried away with the interest of what he saw, that thinking had ceased in him utterly, and imagination lay passive as a mirror to the representation. Nor did the sudden change from the first to the second scene rouse him, for before his thinking machinery could be set in motion, the delight of the new show had again caught him in its meshes. For to him, as it had been to Malcolm, it was the shore at Portlossie, while the cave that opened behind was the Bailie's Barn, where his friends the fishers might at that moment, if it were a fine night, be holding one of their prayer meetings.

The mood lasted all through the talk of Prospero and Miranda; but when Ariel entered there came a snap, and the spell was broken. With a look in which doubt wrestled with horror, Blue Peter turned to Malcolm, and whispered with bated breath—

"I'm jaloosin'—it canna be—it's no a playhoose, this?"

Malcolm merely nodded, but from the nod Peter understood that *he* had had no discovery to make as to the character of the place they were in.

"Eh!" he groaned, overcome with dismay. Then rising suddenly—"Guid nicht to ye, my lord," he said, with indignation, and rudely forced his way from the crowded house.

Malcolm followed in his wake, but said nothing till they were in the street. Then, forgetting utterly his resolves concerning English in the distress of having given his friend ground to complain of his conduct towards him, he laid his hand on Blue Peter's arm, and stopped him in the middle of the narrow street.

"I but thoucht, Peter," he said, "to get ye to see wi' yer ain een, an' hear wi' yer ain ears, afore ye passed jeedgment; but ye're jist like the lave."

"An' what for sudna I be jist like the lave?" returned Peter, fiercely.

"'Cause it's no fair to set doon a' thing for wrang 'at ye ha'e been i' the w'y o' hearing abus't by them 'at kens as little aboot them as yersel'. I cam here mysel', ohn kent whaur I was gaein', the ither nicht, for the first time i' my life; but I wasna fleyt like you, 'cause I kent frae the buik a' 'at was comin'. I hae h'ard in a kirk in ae ten meenutes jist a sicht o' what maun ha'e been sair displeasin' to the he'rt o' the maister o' 's a'; but that nicht I saw nae ill and h'ard nae ill, but was weel peyed back upo' t' em 'at did it an' said it afore the business was ower, an' that's mair nor ye'll see i' the streets o' Portlossie ilka day. 'The play-hoose is whaur ye gang to see what comes o' things 'at ye canna follow oot in ordinar' life."

Whether Malcolm, after a year's theatre-going, would have said precisely the same is hardly doubtful. He spoke of the ideal theatre to which Shakspere is true, and in regard to that he spoke rightly.

"Ye decoy't me intill the hoose o' ineequity!" was Peter's indignant reply; "an' it 's no what ye ever ga'e me cause to expec' o' ye, sae 'at I micht ha'e ta'en tent o' ye."

"I thoucht nae ill o' 't," returned Malcolm

"Weel, *I div*," retorted Peter.

"Then perhaps you are wrong," said Malcolm, "for charity thinketh no evil. You wouldn't stay to see the thing out."

"There ye are at yer English again! an' misgugglin' Scriptur' wi' 't! an' a' this upo' Setterday nicht—maist the Sawbath day! Weel, I ha'e aye h'ard 'at Lon'on was an awfu' place, but I little thoucht the verra air o' 't wad sae sune turn an honest laad like Ma'colm MacPhail intill a scoffer. But maybe it's the markis o' 'im, an' no the muckle toon 'at's made the differ. Ony gait, I'm thinkin' it'll be aboot time for me to be gauin' hame."

Malcolm was vexed with himself, and both disappointed and troubled at the change which had come over his friend, and threatened to destroy the life-long relation between them; his feelings therefore held him silent. Peter concluded that *the marquis* was displeased, and it clenched his resolve to go.

"What w'y am I to win hame, my lord?" he said, when they had walked some distance without word spoken.

"By the Aberdeen smack," returned Malcolm. "She sails on Tuesday. I will see you on board. You must take young Davy with you, for I wouldn't have him here after you are gone. There will be nothing for him to do."

"Ye're unco ready to pairt wi' 's noo 'at ye ha'e nae mair use for 's," said Peter.

"No sae ready as ye seem to pairt wi' yer chairity," said Malcolm, now angry too.

"Ye see Annie 'ill be thinkin' lang," said Peter, softening a little.

No more angry words passed between them, but neither did any thoroughly cordial ones, and they parted at the stairs in mutual, though, with such men, it could not be more than superficial estrangement.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### LORD LIFTORE.

The chief cause of Malcolm's anxiety had been, and perhaps still was, Lord Liftore. In his ignorance of Mr Lenorme there might lie equal cause with him, but he knew such evil of the other that his whole nature revolted against the thought of his marrying his sister. At Lossie he had made himself agreeable to her, and now, if not actually living in the same house, he was there at all hours of the day.

It took nothing from his anxiety to see that his lordship was greatly improved. Not only had the lanky youth passed into a well-formed man, but in countenance, whether as regarded expression, complexion, or feature, he was not merely a handsomer but looked in every way a healthier and better man. Whether it was from some reviving sense of duty, or that, in his attachment to Florimel, he had begun to cherish a desire of being worthy of her, I cannot tell; but he looked altogether more of a man than the time that had elapsed would have given ground to expect, even had he then seemed on the mend, and indeed promised to become a really fine-looking fellow. His features were far more regular if less *informed* than those of the painter, and his carriage prouder if less graceful and energetic. His admiration of and consequent attachment to Florimel had been growing ever since his visit to Lossie House the preceding summer, and if he had said nothing quite definite, it was only because his aunt represented the impolicy of declaring himself just yet: she was too young. She judged thus, attributing her evident indifference to an incapacity as yet for falling in love. Hence, beyond paying her all sorts of attentions and what compliments he was capable of constructing, Lord Liftore had not gone far towards making himself understood—at least, not until just before Malcolm's arrival, when his behaviour had certainly grown warmer and more confidential.

All the time she had been under his aunt's care he had had abundant opportunity for recommending himself, and he had made use of the privilege. For one thing, credibly assured that he looked well in the saddle, he had constantly encouraged Florimel's love of riding and desire to become a thorough horsewoman, and they had ridden a good deal together in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. This practice they continued as much as possible after they came to London early in the spring; but the weather of late had not been favourable, and Florimel had been very little out with him.

For a long time Lady Bellair had had her mind set on a match between the daughter of her old friend the Marquis of Lossie and her nephew, and it was with this in view that, when invited to Lossie House, she had begged leave to bring Lord Meikleham with her. The young man was from the first sufficiently taken with the beautiful girl to satisfy his aunt, and would even then have shown greater fervour in his attentions, had he not met Lizzy Findlay at the wedding of Joseph Mair's sister, and found her more than pleasing. I will not say that from the first he purposed wrong to her: he was too inexperienced in the ways of evil for that; but even when he saw plainly enough to what their mutual attraction was tending, he gave himself no trouble to resist it; and through the whole unhappy affair had not had one smallest struggle with himself for the girl's sake. To himself he was all in all as yet, and such was his opinion of his own precious being, that, had he thought about it, he would have considered the honour of *his* attentions far more than sufficient to make up to any girl in such a position for whatever mishap his acquaintance might bring upon her. What were the grief and mortification of parents to put in the balance against his condescension? what the shame and the humiliation of the girl herself compared with the honour of having been shone upon for a period, however brief, by his enamoured countenance? Must not even the sorrow attendant upon her loss be rendered more than endurable—be radiantly consoled by the memory that she had held such a demigod in her arms? When he left her at last, with many promises, not one of which he ever had the intention of fulfilling, he did purpose sending her a present. But at that time he was poor—dependent, indeed, for his pocket-money upon his aunt; and, up to this hour, he had never since his departure from Lossie House taken the least notice of her either by gift or letter. He had taken care also that it should not be in her power to write to him, and now he did not even know that he was a father. Once or twice the possibility of such being the case occurred to him, and he thought within himself that if he were, and it should come to be talked of, it might, in respect of his present hopes, be awkward and disagreeable; for, although such a predicament was nowise unusual, in this instance the circumstances were. More than one of his bachelor friends had a small family even, but then it was in the regular way of an open and understood secret: the fox had his nest in some pleasant nook, adroitly masked, where lay his vixen and her brood; one day he would abandon them for ever, and, with such gathered store of experience, set up for a respectable family man. A few tears, a neat legal arrangement, and all would be as it had never been, only that the blood of the Montmorencies or Cliffords would meander unclaimed in this or that obscure channel, beautifying the race, and rousing England to noble deeds! But in his case it would be unpleasant—a little—that every one of his future tenantry should know the relation in which he stood to a woman of the fisher-people. He did not fear any resentment—not that he would have cared a straw for it, on such trifling grounds, but people in their low condition never thought anything of such slips on the part of their women especially where a great man was concerned. What he did fear was that the immediate relations of the woman—that was how he spoke of Lizzy to himself—might presume upon the honour he had done them. Lizzy, however, was a good girl, and had promised to keep the matter secret until she heard from him, whatever might be the consequences; and surely there was fascination enough in the holding of a secret with such as he to enable her to keep her promise. She must be perfectly aware, however appearances might be against him, that he was not one to fail in appreciation of her conduct, however easy and natural all that he required of her might be. He would requite her royally when he was Lord of Lossie. Meantime, although it was even now in his power to make her rich amends, he would prudently leave things as they were, and not run the risk that must lie in opening communications.

And so the young earl held his head high, looked as innocent as may be desirable for a gentleman, had many a fair clean hand laid in his, and many a maiden waist yielded to his arm, while "the woman" flitted about half an alien amongst her own, with his child wound in her old shawl of Lossie tartan; wandering not seldom in the gloaming when her little one slept, along the top of the dune, with the wind blowing keen upon her from the regions of eternal ice, sometimes the snow settling softly on her hair, sometimes the hailstones nestling in its meshes; the skies growing blacker about her, and the sea stormier, while hope retreated so far into the heavenly regions, that hope and heaven both were lost to her view. Thus, alas! the things in which he was superior to her, most of all that he was a gentleman, while she was but a peasant girl—the things whose witchery drew her to his will, he made the means of casting her down from the place of her excellency into the mire of shame and loss. The only love worthy of the name ever and always uplifts.

Of the people belonging to the upper town of Portlossie, which raised itself high above the sea-town in other respects besides the topical, there were none who did not make poor Lizzy feel they were aware of her disgrace, and but one man who made her feel it by being kinder than before. That man, strange to say, was the factor. With all his faults he had some chivalry, and he showed it to the fisher-girl. Nor did he alter his manner to her because of the rudeness with which her mother had taken Malcolm's part.

It was a sore proof to Mr Crathie that his discharged servant was in favour with the marchioness when the order came from Mr Soutar to send up Kelpie. She had written to himself when she wanted her own horse; now she sent for this brute through her lawyer. It was plain that Malcolm had been speaking against him; and he was the more embittered therefore against his friends.

Since his departure he had been twice on the point of poisoning the mare.

It was with difficulty he found two men to take her to Aberdeen. There they had an arduous job to get her on board and secure her. But it had been done, and all the Monday night Malcolm was waiting her arrival at the wharf—alone, for after what had passed between them, he would not ask Peter to go with him, and besides he was no use with horses. At length, in the grey of a gurly dawn, the smack came alongside. They had had a rough passage, and the mare was considerably subdued by sickness, so that there was less difficulty in getting her ashore, and she paced for a little while in tolerable quietness. But with every step on dry land, the evil spirit in her awoke, and soon Malcolm had to dismount and lead her. The morning was little advanced, and few vehicles were about, otherwise he could hardly have got her home uninjured, notwithstanding the sugar with which he had filled a pocket. Before he reached the mews he was very near wishing he had never seen her. But when he led her into the stable, he was a little encouraged as well as surprised to find that she had not forgotten Florimel's horse. They had always been a little friendly, and now they greeted each other with an affectionate neigh; after which, with the help of all she could devour, the demoness was quieter.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### KELPIE IN LONDON.

BEFORE noon Lord Liftore came round to the mews: his riding horses were there. Malcolm was not at the moment in the stable.

"What animal is that?" he asked of his own groom, catching sight of Kelpie in her loose box.

"One just come up from Scotland for Lady Lossie, my lord," answered the man.

"She looks a clipper! Lead her out, and let me see her."

"She's not sound in the temper, my lord, the groom that brought her says. He told me on no account to go near her till she got used to the sight of me."

"Oh! you're afraid, are you?" said his lordship, whose breeding had not taught him courtesy to his inferiors.

At the word the man walked into her box. As he did so he looked out for her hoofs, but his circumspection was in vain: in a moment she had wheeled, jammed him against the wall, and taken his shoulder in her teeth. He gave a yell of pain. His lordship caught up a stable-broom, and attacked the mare with it over the door, but it flew from his hand to the other end of the stable, and the partition began to go after it. But she still kept her hold of the man. Happily, however, Malcolm was not far off, and hearing the noise, rushed in. He was just in time to save the groom's life. Clearing the stall-partition, and seizing the mare by the nose with a mighty grasp, he inserted a forefinger behind her tusk, for she was one of the few mares tusked like a horse, and soon compelled her to open her mouth. The groom staggered and would have fallen, so cruelly had she mauled him, but Malcolm's voice roused him.

"For God's sake gang oot, as lang's there twa limbs o' ye stickin' thegither."

The poor fellow just managed to open the door, and fell senseless on the stones. Lord Liftore called for help, and they carried him into the saddle-room, while one ran for the nearest surgeon.

Meantime Malcolm was putting a muzzle on Kelpie, which he believed she understood as a punishment, and while he was thus occupied, his lordship came from the saddle-room and approached the box.

"Who are you?" he said. "I think I have seen you before."

"I was servant to the late Marquis of Lossie, my lord, and now I am groom to her ladyship."

"What a fury you've brought up with you! She'll never do for London."

"I told the man not to go near her, my lord."

"What's the use of her if no one can go near her?"

"I can, my lord."

"By Jove, she's a splendid creature to look at! but I don't know what you can do with her here, my man. She's fit to go double with Satan himself."

"She'll do for me to ride after my lady well enough. If only I had room to exercise her a bit!"

"Take her into the park early in the morning, and gallop her round. Only mind she don't break your neck. What can have made Lady Lossie send for such a devil as that!"

Malcolm held his peace.

"I'll try her myself some morning," said his lordship, who thought himself a better horseman than he was.

"I wouldn't advise you, my lord."

"Who the devil asked your advice?"

"Ten to one she'll kill you, my lord."

"That's my look out," said Liftore, and went into the house.

As soon as he had done with Kelpie, Malcolm dressed himself in his new livery, and went to tell his mistress of her arrival. She sent him orders to bring the mare round in half-an-hour. He went back to her, took off her muzzle, fed her, and while she ate her corn, put on the spurs he had prepared expressly for her use—a spike without a rowel, rather blunt, but sharp indeed when sharply used—like those of the Gauchos of the Pampas. Then he saddled her, and rode her round.

Having had her fit of temper, she was, to all appearance, going to be fairly good for the rest of the day, and looked splendid. She was a large mare, nearly thoroughbred, but with more bone than usual for her breeding, which she carried triumphantly—an animal most men would have been pleased to possess—and proud to ride. Florimel came to the door to see her, accompanied by Liftore, and was so delighted with the very sight of her that she sent at once to the stables for her own horse, that she might ride out attended by Malcolm. His lordship also ordered his horse.

They went straight to Rotten Row for a little gallop, and Kelpie was behaving very well for her.

"What *did* you have two such savages, horse and groom both, up from Scotland for, Florimel?" asked his lordship, as they cantered gently along the Row, Kelpie coming sideways after them, as if she would fain alter the pairing of her legs.

Florimel turned and cast an admiring glance on the two.

"Do you know I am rather proud of them," she said.

"He's a clumsy fellow, the groom; and for the mare, she's downright wicked," said Liftore.

"At least neither is a hypocrite," returned Florimel, with Malcolm's account of his quarrel with the factor in her mind. "The mare is just as wicked as she looks, and the man as good. Believe me, my lord, that man you call a savage never told a lie in his life!"

As she spoke she looked him hard in the face—with her father in her eyes.

Liftore could not return the look with equal steadiness. It seemed for the moment to be inquiring too curiously.

"I know what you mean," he said "You don't believe my professions."

As he spoke he edged his horse close up to hers.

"But," he went on, "if I know that I speak the truth when I swear that I love every breath of wind that has but touched your dress as it passed, that I would die gladly for one loving touch of your hand—why should you not let me ease my heart by saying so? Florimel, my life has been a different thing from the moment I saw you first. It has grown precious to me since I saw that it might be——Confound the fellow! what's he about now with his horse-devil?"

For at that moment his lordship's horse, a high-bred but timid animal, sprang away from the side of Florimel's, and there stood Kelpie on her hind legs, pawing the air between him and his lady, and Florimel, whose old confidence in Malcolm was now more than revived, was laughing merrily at the discomfiture of his attempt at love-making. Her behaviour and his own frustration put him in such a rage that, wheeling quickly round, he struck Kelpie, just as she dropped on all fours, a great cut with his whip across the haunches. She plunged and kicked violently, came within an inch of breaking his horse's leg, and flew across the rail into the park. Nothing could have suited Malcolm better. He did not punish her as he would have done had she been to blame, for he was always just to lower as well as higher animals, but he took her a great round at racing speed, while his mistress and her companion looked on, and everyone in the Row stopped and stared. Finally, he hopped her over the rail again, and brought her up dripping and foaming to his mistress. Florimel's eyes were flashing, and Liftore looked still angry.

"Dinna du that again, my lord," said Malcolm. "Ye're no my maister; an' gien ye war, ye wad hae no richt to brak my neck."

"No fear of that! That's not how your neck will be broken, my man," said his lordship, with an attempted laugh; for though he was all the angrier that he was ashamed of what he had done, he dared not further wrong the servant before his mistress.

A policeman came up and laid his hand on Kelpie's bridle.

"Take care what you're about," said Malcolm; "the mare's not safe.—There's my mistress, the Marchioness of Lossie."

The man saw an ugly look in Kelpie's eye, withdrew his hand, and turned to Florimel.

"My groom is not to blame," said she. "Lord Liftore struck his mare, and she became ungovernable."

The man gave a look at Liftore, seemed to take his likeness, touched his hat, and withdrew.

"You'd better ride the jade home," said Liftore.

Malcolm only looked at his mistress. She moved on, and he followed.

He was not so innocent in the affair as he had seemed. The expression of Liftore's face as he drew nearer to Florimel, was to him so hateful, that he interfered in a very literal fashion: Kelpie had been doing no more than he had made her until the earl struck her.

"Let us ride to Richmond to-morrow," said Florimel, "and have a good gallop in the park. Did you ever see a finer sight than that animal on the grass?"

"The fellow's too heavy for her," said Liftore. "I should very much like to try her myself."

Florimel pulled up, and turned to Malcolm.

"MacPhail," she said, "have that mare of yours ready whenever Lord Liftore chooses to ride her."

"I beg your pardon, my lady," returned Malcolm, "but would your ladyship make a condition with my lord that he shall not mount her anywhere on the stones."

"By Jove!" said Liftore scornfully. "You fancy yourself the only man that can ride!"

"It's nothing to me, my lord, if you break your neck; but I am bound to tell you I do *not* think your lordship will sit my mare. Stoat can't; and I can only because I know her as well as my own palm."

The young earl made no answer and they rode on—Malcolm nearer than his lordship liked.

"I can't think, Florimel," he said, "why you should want that fellow about you again. He is not only very awkward, but insolent as well."

"I should call it straightforward," returned Florimel.

"My dear Lady Lossie! See how close he is riding to us now."

"He is anxious, I daresay, as to your Lordship's behaviour. He is like some dogs that are a little too careful of their mistresses—touchy as to how they are addressed;—not a bad fault in dog—or groom either. He saved my life once, and he was a great favourite with my father: I won't hear anything against him."

"But for your own sake—just consider:—what will people say if you show any preference for a man like that?" said Liftore, who had already become jealous of the man who in his heart he feared could ride better than himself.

"My lord!" exclaimed Florimel, with a mingling of surprise and indignation in her voice, and suddenly quickening her pace, dropped him behind.

Malcolm was after her so instantly that it brought him abreast of Liftore.

"Keep your own place," said his lordship, with stern rebuke.

"I keep my place to my mistress," returned Malcolm.

Liftore looked at him as if he would strike him. But he thought better of it apparently, and rode after Florimel.

## CHAPTER XX.

### BLUE PETER.

By the time he had put up Kelpie, Malcolm found that his only chance of seeing Blue Peter before he left London, lay in going direct to the wharf. On his road he reflected on what had just passed, and was not altogether pleased with himself. He had nearly lost his temper with Liftore; and if he should act in any way unbefitting the position he had assumed, from the duties of which he was in no degree exonerated by the fact that he had assumed it for a purpose, it would not only be a failure in himself, but an impediment perhaps insurmountable in the path of his service. To attract attention was almost to insure frustration. When he reached the wharf, he found they had nearly got her freight on board the smack. Blue Peter stood on the forecastle. He went to him and explained how it was that he had been unable to join him sooner.

"I didna ken ye," said Blue Peter, "in sic playactor kin' o' claes."

"Nobody in London would look at me twice now. But you remember how we were stared at when first we came," said Malcolm.

"Ow ay!" returned Peter with almost a groan; "there's a sair cheenge past upo' you, but I'm gauin' hame to the auld w'y o' things. The herrin' 'll be aye to the fore, I'm thinkin'; an' gien we getna a harbour we'll get a h'aven."

Judging it better to take no notice of this pretty strong expression of distrust and disappointment, Malcolm led him aside, and putting a few sovereigns in his hand, said,

"Here, Peter, that will take you home."

"It's ower muckle—a heap ower muckle. I'll tak naething rae ye but what'll pay my w'y."

"And what is such a trifle between friends?"

"There *was* a time, Ma'colm, whan what was mine was yours, an' what was yours was mine, but that time's gane."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Peter; but still I owe you as much as that for bare wages."

"There was no word o' wages when ye said, Peter, come to Lon'on wi' me.—Davie there—he maun hae his wauges."

"Weel," said Malcolm, thinking it better to give way, "I'm no abune bein' obleeged to ye, Peter. I maun bide my time, I see, for ye winna lippen till me. Eh man! your faith's sune at the wa'."

"Faith! what faith?" returned Peter, almost fiercely. "We're tauld to put no faith in man; an' gien I bena come to that yet freely, I'm nearer till't nor ever I was afore."

"Weel, Peter, a' 'at I can say is, I ken my ain hert, an' ye dinna ken't."

"Daur ye tell me!" cried Peter. "Disna the Scriptur' itsel' say the hert o' man is deceitfu' an' despratly wickit: who can know it?"

"Peter," said Malcolm, and he spoke very gently, for he understood that love and not hate was at the root of his friend's anger and injustice, "gien ye winna lippen to me, there's naething for't but I maun lippen to you. Gang hame to yer wife, an' gi'e her my compliments, an' tell her a' 'at's past atween you an' me, as near, word for word, as ye can tell the same; an' say till her, I pray her to judge atween you an' me—an' to mak the best o' me to ye 'at she can, for I wad ill thole to loss yer freenship, Peter."

The same moment came the command for all but passengers to go ashore. The men grasped each other's hand, looked each other in the eyes with something of mutual reproach, and parted —Blue Peter down the river to Scaurnose and Annie, Malcolm to the yacht lying still in the Upper Pool.

He saw it taken properly in charge, and arranged for having it towed up the river and anchored in the Chelsea Reach.

When Blue Peter found himself once more safe out at sea, with twelve hundred yards of canvas spread above him in one mighty wing betwixt boom and gaff, and the wind blowing half a gale, the weather inside him began to change a little. He began to see that he had not been behaving altogether as a friend ought. It was not that he saw reason for being better satisfied with Malcolm or his conduct, but reason for being worse satisfied with himself; and the consequence was that he grew still angrier with Malcolm, and the wrong he had done him seemed more and more an unpardonable one.

When he was at length seated on the top of the coach running betwixt Aberdeen and Fochabers, which would set him down as near Scaurnose as coach could go, he began to be doubtful how Annie, formally retained on Malcolm's side by the message he had to give her, would judge in the question between them; for what did she know of theatres and such places? And the doubt strengthened as he neared home. The consequence was that he felt in no haste to execute Malcolm's commission; and hence, the delights of greeting over, Annie was the first to open her bag of troubles: Mr Crathie had given them notice to quit at Midsummer.

"Jist what I micht hae expeckit!" cried Blue Peter, starting up. "Woe be to the man 'at puts his trust in princes! I luikit till him to save the fisher-fowk, an' no to the Lord; an' the tooer o' Siloam 's fa'en upo' my heid:—what does he, the first thing, but turn his ain auld freen's oot o' the sma beild they had! That his father nor his gran'father, 'at was naither o' them God-fearin' men, wad never hae put their han' till. Eh, wuman! but my hert's sair 'ithin me. To think o' Ma'colm MacPhail turnin' his back upo' them 'at's been freens wi' 'im sin ever he was a wee loonie, rinnin' aboot in coaties!"

"Hoot, man! what's gotten intill yer heid?" returned his wife. "It's no Ma'colm; it's the illwully factor. Bide ye till he comes till 's ain, an' Maister Crathie 'll hae to lauch o' the wrang side o' 's mou'."

But thereupon Peter began his tale of how he had fared in London, and in the excitement of keenly anticipated evil, and with his recollection of events wrapped in the mist of a displeasure which had deepened during his journey, he so clothed the facts of Malcolm's conduct in the garments of his own feelings that the mind of Annie Mair also became speedily possessed with the fancy that their friend's good fortune had upset his moral equilibrium, and that he had not only behaved to her husband with pride and arrogance, breaking all the ancient bonds of friendship between them, but had tried to seduce him from the ways of righteousness by inveigling him into a playhouse, where marvels of wickedness were going on at the very time. She wept a few bitter tears of disappointment, dried them hastily, lifted her head high, and proceeded to set her affairs in order as if death were at the door.

For indeed it was to them as a death to leave Scaurnose. True, Annie came from inland, and was not of the fisher-race, but this part of the coast she had known from childhood, and in this cottage all her married years had been spent, while banishment of the sort involved banishment from every place they knew, for all the neighbourhood was equally under the power of the factor. And poor as their accommodation here was, they had plenty of open air and land-room ; whereas if they should be compelled to go to any of the larger ports, it would be to circumstances greatly inferior, and a neighbourhood in all probability very undesirable for their children.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### MR GRAHAM.

When Malcolm at length reached his lodging, he found there a letter from Miss Horn, containing the much desired information as to where the schoolmaster was to be found in the London wilderness. It was now getting rather late, and the dusk of a spring night had begun to gather ; but little more than the breadth of the Regent's Park lay between him and his best friend—his only one in London—and he set out immediately for Camden Town.

The relation between him and his late schoolmaster was indeed of the strongest and closest. Long before Malcolm was born, and ever since, had Alexander Graham loved Malcolm's mother ; but not until within the last few months had he learned that Malcolm was the son of Griselda Campbell. The discovery was to the schoolmaster like the bursting out of a known flower on an unknown plant. He knew then, not why he had loved the boy, for he loved every one of his pupils more or less, but why he had loved him with such a peculiar tone of affection.

It was a lovely evening. There had been rain in the afternoon as Malcolm walked home from the Pool, but before the sun set it had cleared up; and as he went through the park towards the dingy suburb, the first heralds of the returning youth of the year met him from all sides in the guise of odours—not yet those of flowers, but the more ethereal if less sweet, scents of buds and grass, and ever pure earth moistened with the waters of heaven. And to his surprise he found that his sojourn in a great city, although as yet so brief, had already made the open earth with its corn and grass more dear to him and wonderful. But when he left the park, and crossed the Hampstead Road into a dreary region of dwellings crowded and commonplace as the thoughts of a worshipper of Mammon, houses upon houses, here and there shepherded by a tall spire, it was hard to believe that the spring was indeed *coming slowly up this way.*

After not a few inquiries, he found himself at a stationer's shop, a poor little place, and learned that Mr Graham lodged over it, and was then at home.

He was shown up into a shabby room, with an iron bedstead, a chest of drawers daubed with sickly paint, a table with a stained red cover, a few bookshelves in a recess over the wash-stand, and two chairs seated with hair-cloth. On one of these, by the side of a small fire in a neglected grate, sat the schoolmaster reading his Plato. On the table beside him lay his Greek New Testament, and an old edition of George Herbert. He looked up as the door opened, and, notwithstanding his strange dress, recognising at once his friend and pupil, rose hastily, and welcomed him with hand and eyes, and countenance, but without word spoken. For a few moments the two stood silent, holding each the other's hand, and gazing each in the other's eyes, then sat down, still speechless, one on each side of the fire.

They looked at each other and smiled, and again a minute passed. Then the schoolmaster rose, rang the bell, and when it was answered by a rather careworn young woman, requested her to bring tea.

"I'm sorry I cannot give you cakes or fresh butter, my lord," he said with a smile, and they were the first words spoken. "The former is not to be had, and the latter is beyond my means. But what I have will content one who is able to count that abundance which many would count privation."

He spoke in the choice word, measured phrase, and stately speech which Wordsworth says "grave livers do in Scotland use," but under it all rang a tone of humour, as if he knew the form of his utterance too important for the subject-matter of it, and would gently amuse with it both his visitor and himself.

He was a man of middle height, but so thin that notwithstanding a slight stoop in the shoulders, he looked rather tall; much on the young side of fifty, but apparently a good way on the other, partly from the little hair he had being grey. He had sandy-coloured whiskers, and a shaven chin. Except his large sweetly closed mouth, and rather long upper lip, there was nothing very notable in his features. At ordinary moments, indeed, there was nothing in his appearance other than insignificant to the ordinary observer. His eyes were of a pale quiet blue, but when he smiled they sparkled and throbbed with light. He wore the same old black tail-coat he had worn last in his school at Portlossie, but the white neckcloth he had always been seen in there had given place to a black one: that was the sole change in the aspect of the man.

About Portlossie he had been greatly respected, notwithstanding the rumour that he was a "stickit minister," that is, one who had failed in the attempt to preach; and when the presbytery dismissed him on the charge of heresy, there had been many tears on the part of his pupils, and much childish defiance of his unenviable successor.

Few words passed between the two men until they had had their tea, and then followed a long talk, Malcolm first explaining his present position, and then answering many questions of the master as to how things had gone since he left. Next followed anxious questions on Malcolm's side as to how his friend found himself in the prison of London.

"I do miss the air, and the laverocks (*skylarks*), and the gowans," he confessed; "but I have them all in my mind, and at my age a man ought to be able to satisfy himself with the idea of a thing in his soul. Of outer things that have contributed to his inward growth, the memory alone may then well be enough. The sights which, when I lie down to sleep, rise before that inward eye Wordsworth calls the bliss of solitude, have upon me power almost of a spiritual vision, so purely radiant are they of that which dwells in them, the divine thought which is their substance, their *hypostasis*. My boy! I doubt if you can tell what it is to know the presence of the living God in and about you."

"I houp I hae a bit notion o' 't, sir," said Malcolm.

"But believe me that in any case, however much a man may have of it, he may have it endlessly more. Since I left the cottage where I hoped to end my days under the shadow of the house of your ancestors, since I came into this region of bricks and smoke, and the crowded tokens too plain of want and care, I have found a reality in the things I had been trying to teach you at Portlossie, such as I had before imagined only in my best moments. And more still: I am now far better able to understand how it must have been with our Lord when he was trying to teach the men and women of Palestine to have faith in God. Depend upon it, we get our best use of life in learning by the facts of its ebb and flow to understand the Son of Man. And again, when we understand Him, then only do we understand our life and ourselves. Never can we know the majesty of the will of God concerning us except by understanding Jesus and the work the Father gave Him to do. Now, nothing is of a more heavenly delight than to enter into a dusky room in the house of your friend, and there, with a blow of the heavenly rod, draw light from the dark wall—open a window, a fountain of the eternal light, and let in the truth which is the life of the world. Joyously would a man spend his life, right joyously even if the road led to the gallows, in showing the grandest he sees—the splendid purities of the divine religion—the mountain top up to which the voice of God is ever calling his children. Yes, I can understand even how a man might live, like the good hermits of old, in triumphant meditation upon such all-satisfying truths, and let the waves of the world's time wash by him in unheeded flow until his cell changed to his tomb, and his spirit soared free. But to spend your time in giving little lessons when you have great ones to give; in teaching the multiplication table the morning after you made at midnight a grand discovery upon the very summits of the moonlit mountain range of the mathematics; in enforcing the old law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, when you know in your own heart that not a soul can ever learn to keep it without first learning to fulfil an infinitely greater one—*to love his neighbour even as Christ hath loved him*—then indeed one may well grow disheartened, and feel as if he were not in the place prepared for, and at the work required of him. But it is just then that he must go back to school himself, and learn not only the patience of God who keeps the whole dull obstinate world alive, while generation after generation is born and vanishes, and of the mighty multitude only one here and there rises up from the fetters of humanity into the freedom of the sons of God—and yet goes on teaching the whole, and bringing every man who will but turn his ear a little towards the voice that calls him, nearer and nearer to the second birth—of sonship and liberty—not only this divine patience must he learn, but the divine insight as well, which in every form spies the reflex of the truth it cannot contain, and in every lowliest lesson sees the highest drawn nearer, and the soul growing alive unto God."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### RICHMOND PARK.

THE next day at noon, mounted on Kelpie, Malcolm was in attendance upon his mistress, who was eager after a gallop in Richmond Park. Lord Liftore, who had intended to accompany her, had not made his appearance yet, but Florimel did not seem the less desirous of setting out at the time she had appointed Malcolm. The fact was she had said one o'clock to Liftore, intending twelve, that she might get away without him. Kelpie seemed on her good behaviour, and they started quietly enough. By the time they had got out of the park upon the Kensington Road, however, the evil spirit had begun to wake in her. But even when she was quietest, she was nothing to be trusted, and about London Malcolm found he dared never let his thoughts go, or take his attention quite off her ears. They got to Kew Bridge in safety nevertheless, though whether they were to get safely across was doubtful all the time they were upon it, for again and again she seemed on the very point of clearing the stone balustrade, but for the terrible bit and chain without which Malcolm never dared ride her. Still, whatever her caracoles or escapades, they caused Florimel nothing but amusement, for her confidence in Malcolm—that he could do whatever he believed he could—was unbounded. They got through Richmond—with some trouble, but hardly were they well into the park, when Lord Liftore, followed by his groom, came suddenly up behind them at such a rate as quite destroyed the small stock of equanimity Kelpie had to go upon. She bolted.

Florimel was a good rider, and knew herself quite mistress of her horse, and if she now followed, it was at her own will, and with a design; she wanted to make the horses behind her bolt also if she could. His lordship came flying after her, and his groom after him, but she kept increasing her pace until they were all at full stretch, thundering over the grass—upon which Malcolm had at once turned Kelpie, giving her little rein and plenty of spur. Gradually Florimel slackened speed, and at last pulled up suddenly. Liftore and his groom went past her like the wind. She turned at right angles and galloped back to the road. There, on a gaunt thoroughbred, with a furnace of old life in him yet, sat Lenorme, whom she had already passed and signalled to remain thereabout. They drew alongside of each other, but they did not shake hands; they only looked each in the other's eyes, and for a few moments neither spoke. The three riders were now far away over the park, and still Kelpie held on and the other horses after her.

"I little expected *such* a pleasure," said Lenorme.

"I meant to give it you, though," said Florimel, with a merry laugh. "Bravo, Kelpie! take them with you," she cried, looking after the still retreating horsemen. "I have got a familiar since I saw you last, Raoul," she went on. "See if I don't get some good for us out of him!—We'll move gently along the road here, and by the time Liftore's horse is spent, we shall be ready for a good gallop. I want to tell you all about it. I did not mean Liftore to be here when I sent you word, but he has been too much for me."

Lenorme replied with a look of gratitude; and as they walked their horses along, she told him all concerning Malcolm and Kelpie.

"Liftore hates him already," she said, "and I can hardly wonder; but *you* must not, for you will find him useful. He is one I can depend upon. You should have seen the look Liftore gave him when he told him he could not sit his mare! It would have been worth gold to you."

Lenorme winced a little.

"He thinks no end of his riding," Florimel continued; "but if it were not so improper to have secrets with another gentleman, I would tell you that he rides—just pretty well."

Lenorme's great brow gloomed over his eyes like the Eiger in a mist, but he said nothing yet.

"He wants to ride Kelpie, and I have told my groom to let him have her. Perhaps she'll break his neck."

Lenorme smiled grimly.

"You wouldn't mind, would you, Raoul?" added Florimel, with a roguish look.

"Would you mind telling me, Florimel, what you mean by the impropriety of having secrets with another gentleman? Am *I* the other gentleman?"

"Why, of course! You know Liftore imagines he has only to name the day."

"And you allow an idiot like that to cherish such a degrading idea of you."

"Why, Raoul! what does it matter what a fool like him thinks?"

"If you don't mind it, I do. I feel it an insult to me that he should dare think of you like that."

"I don't know. I suppose I shall have to marry him some day."

"Lady Lossie, do you want to make me hate you?"

"Don't be foolish, Raoul. It won't be to-morrow—nor the next day. *Freuet euch des Lebens!*"

"O Florimel! what *is* to come of this? Do you want to break my heart?—I hate to talk rubbish. You won't kill me—you will only ruin my work, and possibly drive me mad."

Florimel drew close to his side, laid her hand on his arm, and looked in his face with a witching entreaty.

"We have the present, Raoul," she said.

"So has the butterfly," answered Lenorme; "but I had rather be the caterpillar with a future.—Why don't you put a stop to the man's lovemaking? He can't love you or any woman. He does not know what love means. It makes me ill to hear him when he thinks he is paying you irresistible compliments. They are so silly! so mawkish! Good heavens, Florimel! can you imagine that smile every day and always? Like the rest of his class he seems to think himself perfectly justified in making fools of women. *I* want to help you to grow as beautiful as God meant you to be when he thought of you first. I want you to be my embodied vision of life, that I may for ever worship at your feet—live in you, die with you: such bliss, even were there nothing beyond, would be enough for the heart of a God to bestow."

"Stop, stop, Raoul; I'm not worthy of such love," said Florimel, again laying her hand on his arm. "I do wish for your sake I had been born a village-girl."

"If you had been, then I might have wished for your sake that I had been born a marquis. As it is I would rather be a painter than any nobleman in Europe—that is, with you to love me. Your love is my patent of nobility. But I may glorify what you love—and tell you that I can confer something on you also—what none of your noble admirers can.—God forgive me! you will make me hate them all."

"Raoul, this won't do at all," said Florimel, with the authority that should belong only to the one in the right. And indeed for the moment she felt the dignity of restraining a too impetuous passion. "You will spoil everything. I dare not come to your studio if you are going to behave like this. It would be very wrong of me. And if I am never to come and see you, I shall die—I know I shall."

The girl was so full of the delight of the secret love between them, that she cared only to live in the present as if there were no future beyond: Lenorme wanted to make that future like but better than the present. The word marriage put Florimel in a rage. She thought herself superior to Lenorme, because he, in the dread of losing her, would have her marry him at once, while she was more than content with the bliss of seeing him now and then. Often and often her foolish talk stung him with bitter pain—worst of all when it compelled him to doubt whether there was that in her to be loved as he was capable of loving. Yet always the conviction that there was a deep root of nobleness in her nature again got uppermost; and, had it not been so, I fear he would, nevertheless, have continued to prove her irresistible as often as she chose to exercise upon him the full might of her witcheries. At one moment she would reveal herself in such a sudden rush of tenderness as seemed possible only to one ready to become his altogether and for ever; the next she would start away as if she had never meant anything, and talk as if not a thought were in her mind beyond the cultivation of a pleasant acquaintance doomed to pass with the season, if not with the final touches to her portrait. Or she would fall to singing some song he had taught her, more likely a certain one he had written in a passionate mood of bitter tenderness, with the hope of stinging her love to some show of deeper life; but would, while she sang, look with merry defiance in his face, as if she adopted in seriousness what he had written in loving and sorrowful satire.

They rode in silence for some hundred yards. At length he spoke, replying to her last asseveration.

"Then what *can* you gain, child," he said——

"Will you dare to call *me* child—a marchioness in my own right!" she cried, playfully threatening him with uplifted whip, in the handle of which the little jewels sparkled.

"What, then, can you gain, my lady marchioness," he resumed, with soft seriousness, and a sad smile, "by marrying one of your own rank?—I should lay new honour and consideration at your feet. I am young. I have done fairly well already. But I have done nothing to what I could do now, if only my heart lay safe in the port of peace :—you know where alone that is for me, my—lady marchioness. And you know too that the names of great painters go down with honour from generation to generation, when my lord this or my lord that is remembered only as a label to the picture that makes the painter famous. I am not a great painter yet, but I will be one if you will be good to me. And men shall say, when they look on your portrait, in ages to come : No wonder he was such a painter when he had such a woman to paint."

He spoke the words with a certain tone of dignified playfulness.

"When shall the woman sit to you again, painter?" said Florimel—sole reply to his rhapsody.

The painter thought a little. Then he said :

"I don't like that tire-woman of yours. She has two evil eyes—one for each of us. I have again and again caught their expression when they were upon us, and she thought none were upon her : I can see without lifting my head when I am painting, and my art has made me quick at catching expressions, and, I hope, at interpreting them."

"I don't altogether like her myself," said Florimel. "Of late I am not so sure of her as I used to be. But what can I do? I must have somebody with me, you know.—A thought strikes me. Yes. I won't say now what it is lest I should disappoint my—painter ; but—yes—you shall see what I will dare for you, faithless man !"

She set off at a canter, turned on to the grass, and rode to meet Liftore, whom she saw in the distance returning, followed by the two grooms.

"Come on, Raoul," she cried, looking back ; "I must account for you. He sees I have not been alone."

Lenorme joined her, and they rode along side by side.

The earl and the painter knew each other : as they drew near, the painter lifted his hat, and the earl nodded.

"You owe Mr Lenorme some acknowledgment, my lord, for taking charge of me after your sudden desertion," said Florimel "Why did you gallop off in such a mad fashion?"

"I am sorry," began Liftore a little embarrassed.

"Oh ! don't trouble yourself to apologise," said Florimel. "I have always understood that great horsemen find a horse more interesting than a lady. It is a mark of their breed, I am told."

She knew that Liftore would not be ready to confess he could not hold his hack.

"If it hadn't been for Mr Lenorme," she added, "I should have been left without a squire, subject to any whim of my four footed servant here."

As she spoke she patted the neck of her horse. The earl, on his side, had been looking the painter's horse up and down with a would-be humorous expression of criticism.

"I beg your pardon, marchioness," he replied; "but you pulled up so quickly that we shot past you. I thought you were close behind, and preferred following.—Seen his best days, eh, Lenorme?" he concluded, willing to change the subject.

"I fancy he doesn't think so," returned the painter. "I bought him out of a butterman's cart, three months ago. He's been coming to himself ever since. Look at his eye, my lord."

"Are you knowing in horses, then?"

"I can't say I am, beyond knowing how to treat them something like human beings."

"That's no ill," said Malcolm to himself. He was just near enough, on the pawing and foaming Kelpie, to catch what was passing.—"The fallow 'll du. He's worth a score o' sic yerls as yon."

"Ha! ha!" said his lordship; "I don't know about that.—He's not the best of tempers, I can see. But look at that demon of Lady Lossie's—that black mare there! I wish you could teach her some of your humanity."—By the way, Florimel, I think now we *are* upon the grass,"—he said it loftily, as if submitting to an injustice—"I will presume to mount the reprobate."

The gallop had communicated itself to Liftore's blood, and, besides, he thought after such a run Kelpie would be less extravagant in her behaviour.

"She is at your service," said Florimel.

He dismounted, his groom rode up, he threw him the reins, and called Malcolm.

"Bring your mare here, my man," he said.

Malcolm rode her up half way, and dismounted.

"If your lordship is going to ride her," he said, "will you please get on her here. I would rather not take her near the other horses."

"Well, you know her better than I do.—You and I must ride about the same length, I think."

So saying his lordship carelessly measured the stirrup-leather against his arm, and took the reins.

"Stand well forward, my lord. Don't mind turning your back to her head: I'll look after her teeth; you mind her hind-hoof," said Malcolm, with her head in one hand and the stirrup in the other.

Kelpie stood rigid as a rock, and the earl swung himself up cleverly enough. But hardly was he in the saddle, and Malcolm had just let her go, when she plunged and lashed out; then, having failed to unseat her rider, stood straight up on her hind legs.

"Give her her head, my lord," cried Malcolm.

She stood swaying in the air, Liftore's now frightened face half hid in her mane, and his spurs stuck in her flanks.

"Come off her, my lord, for God's sake. Off with you!" cried Malcolm, as he leaped at her head. "She'll be on her back in a moment."

Liftore only clung the harder. Malcolm caught her head—just in time: she was already falling backwards.

"Let all go, my lord. Throw yourself off."

He swung her towards him with all his strength, and just as his lordship fell off behind her, she fell sideways to Malcolm, and clear of Liftore.

Malcolm was on the side away from the little group, and their own horses were excited, those who had looked breathless on at the struggle could not tell how he had managed it, but when they expected to see the groom writhing under the weight of the demoness, there he was with his knee upon her head—while Liftore was gathering himself up from the ground, only just beyond the reach of her iron-shod hoofs.

"Thank God!" said Florimel, "there is no harm done.—Well, have you had enough of her yet, Liftore?"

"Pretty nearly, I think," said his lordship, with an attempt at a laugh, as he walked rather feebly and foolishly towards his horse. He mounted with some difficulty, and looked very pale.

"I hope you're not much hurt," said Florimel kindly, as she moved alongside of him.

"Not in the least—only disgraced," he answered, almost angrily. "The brute's a perfect Satan. You *must* part with her. With such a horse and such a groom you'll get yourself talked of all over London. I believe the fellow himself was at the bottom of it. You really *must* sell her."

"I would, my lord, if *you* were my groom," answered Florimel, whom his accusation of Malcolm had filled with angry contempt; and she moved away towards the still prostrate mare.

Malcolm was quietly seated on her head. She had ceased sprawling, and lay nearly motionless, but for the heaving of her sides with her huge inhalations. She knew from experience that struggling was useless.

"I beg your pardon, my lady," said Malcolm, "but I daren't get up."

"How long do you mean to sit there then?" she asked.

"If your ladyship wouldn't mind riding home without me, I would give her a good half hour of it. I always do when she throws herself over like that.—I've gat my Epictetus?" he asked himself, feeling in his coat-pocket.

"Do as you please," answered his mistress. "Let me see you when you get home. I should like to know you are safe."

"Thank you, my lady; there's little fear of that," said Malcolm.

Florimel returned to the gentlemen, and they rode homewards. On the way she said suddenly to the earl,

"Can you tell me, Liftore, who Epictetus was?"

"I'm sure I don't know," answered his lordship. "One of the old fellows."

She turned to Lenorme. Happily the Christian heathen was not altogether unknown to the painter.

"May I inquire why your ladyship asks?" he said, when he had told all he could at the moment recollect.

"Because," she answered, "I left my groom sitting on his horse's head reading Epictetus."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Liftore. "Ha! ha! ha! In the original, I suppose!"

"I don't doubt it," said Florimel.

In about two hours Malcolm reported himself. Lord Liftore had gone home, they told him. The painter-fellow, as Wallis called him, had stayed to lunch, but was now gone also, and Lady Lossie was alone in the drawing-room.

She sent for him.

"I am glad to see you safe, MacPhail," she said. "It is clear your Kelpie—don't be alarmed; I am not going to make you part with her—but it is clear she won't always do for you to attend me upon. Suppose now I wanted to dismount and make a call, or go into a shop?"

"There's a sort of a friendship between your Abbot and her, my lady; she would stand all the better if I had him to hold."

"Well, but how would you put me up again?"

"I never thought of that, my lady. Of course I daren't let you come near Kelpie."

"Could you trust yourself to buy another horse to ride after me about town?"

"No, my lady, not without a ten days' trial. If lies stuck like London mud, there's many a horse would never be seen again. But there's Mr Lenorme! If he would go with me, I fancy between us we could do pretty well."

"Ah! a good idea," returned his mistress. "But what makes you think of him?" she added, willing enough to talk about him.

"The look of the gentleman and his horse together, and what I heard him say," answered Malcolm.

"What did you hear him say?"

"That he knew he had to treat horses something like human beings. I've often fancied, within the last few months, that God does with some people something like as I do with Kelpie."

"I know nothing about theology."

"I don't fancy you do, my lady; but this concerns biography rather than theology. No one could tell what I meant except he had watched his own history, and that of people he knew."

"And horses too?"

"It's hard to get at their insides, my lady, but I suspect it must be so. I'll ask Mr Graham."

"What Mr Graham?"

"The schoolmaster of Portlossie."

"Is he in London, then?"

"Yes, my lady. He believed too much to please the presbytery, and they turned him out."

"I should like to see him. He was very attentive to my father on his death-bed."

"Your ladyship will never know till you are dead yourself what Mr Graham did for my lord."

"What do you mean? What could he do for him?"

"He helped him through sore trouble of mind, my lady."

Florimel was silent for a little, then repeated,

"I should like to see him. I ought to pay him some attention. Couldn't I make them give him his school again?"

"I don't know about that, my lady; but I am sure he would not take it against the will of the presbytery."

"I should like to do something for him. Ask him to call."

"If your ladyship lays your commands upon me," answered Malcolm; "otherwise I would rather not."

"Why so, pray?"

"Because, except he can be of any use to you, he will not come."

"But I want to be of use to him."

"How, if I may ask, my lady?"

"That I can't exactly say on the spur of the moment. I must know the man first—especially if you are right in supposing he would not enjoy a victory over the presbytery. *I* should. He wouldn't take money, I fear."

"Except it came of love or work, he would put it from him as he would brush the dust from his coat."

"I could introduce him to good society. That is no small privilege to one of his station."

"He has more of that and better than your ladyship could give him. He holds company with Socrates and St. Paul, and greater still."

"But they're not like living people."

"Very like them, my lady—only far better company in general. But Mr Graham would leave Plato himself—yes, or St. Paul either, though he were sitting beside him in the flesh, to go and help any old washerwoman that wanted him."

"Then I want him."

"No, my lady, you don't want him."

"How dare you say so?"

"If you did, you would go to him."

Florimel's eyes flashed, and her pretty lip curled. She turned to her writing-table, annoyed with herself that she could not find a fitting word wherewith to rebuke his presumption—rudeness, was it not?—and a feeling of angry shame arose in her, that she, the Marchioness of Lossie, had not dignity enough to prevent her own groom from treating her like a child. But he was far too valuable to quarrel with.

She sat down and wrote a note.

"There," she said, "take that note to Mr Lenorme. I have asked him to help you in the choice of a horse."

"What price would you be willing to go to, my lady?"

"I leave that to Mr Lenorme's judgment—and your own," she added.

"Thank you, my lady," said Malcolm, and was leaving the room, when Florimel called him back.

"Next time you see Mr Graham," she said, "give him my compliments, and ask him if I can be of any service to him."

"I'll do that, my lady. I am sure he will take it very kindly."

Florimel made no answer, and Malcolm went to find the painter.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### PAINTER AND GROOM.

THE address upon the note Malcolm had to deliver took him to a house in Chelsea—one of a row of beautiful old houses fronting the Thames, with little gardens between them and the road. The one he sought was overgrown with creepers, most of them now covered with fresh spring buds. The afternoon had turned cloudy, and a cold east wind came up the river, which, as the tide was falling, raised little waves on its surface and made Malcolm think of the herring. Somehow, as he went up to the door, a new chapter of his life seemed about to commence.

The servant who took the note, returned immediately, and showed him up to the study, a large back room, looking over a good-sized garden, with stables on one side. There Lenorme sat at his easel.

"Ah!" he said, "I'm glad to see that wild animal has not quite torn you to pieces. Take a chair. What on earth made you bring such an incarnate fury to London?"

"I see well enough now, sir, she's not exactly the one for London use, but if you had once ridden her, you would never quite enjoy another between your knees."

"She's such an infernal brute!"

"You can't say too ill of her. But I fancy a gaol chaplain sometimes takes the most interest in the worst villain under his charge. I should be a proud man to make *her* fit to live with decent people."

"I'm afraid she'll be too much for you. At last you'll have to part with her, I fear."

"If she had bitten you as often as she has me, sir, you wouldn't part with her. Besides, it would be wrong to sell her. She would only be worse with anyone else. But, indeed, though you will hardly believe it, she is better than she was."

"Then what must she have been!"

"You may well say that, sir!"

"Here your mistress tells me you want my assistance in choosing another horse."

"Yes, sir—to attend upon her in London."

"I don't profess to be knowing in horses: what made you think of me?"

"I saw how you sat your own horse, sir, and I heard you say you bought him out of a butterman's cart, and treated him like a human being: that was enough for me, sir. I've long had the notion that the beasts, poor things, have a half-sleeping, half-waking human soul in them, and it was a great pleasure to hear you say something of the same sort. 'That gentleman,' I said to myself, '—he and I would understand one another.'"

"I am glad you think so," said Lenorme, with entire courtesy. —It was not merely that the very doubtful recognition of his profession by society had tended to keep him clear of his prejudices, but both as a painter and a man he found the young fellow exceedingly attractive;—as a painter from the rare combination of such strength with such beauty, and as a man from a certain yet rarer clarity of nature which to the vulgar observer seems fatuity until he has to encounter it in action, when the contrast is like meeting a thunderbolt. Naturally the dishonest takes the honest for a fool. Beyond his understanding, he imagines him beneath it. But Lenorme, although so much more a man of the world, was able in a measure to look into Malcolm and appreciate him. His nature and his art combined in enabling him to do this.

"You see, sir," Malcolm went on, encouraged by the simplicity of Lenorme's manner, "if they were nothing like us, how should we be able to get on with them at all, teach them anything, or come a hair nearer them, do what we might? For all her wickedness I firmly believe Kelpie has a sort of regard for me—I won't call it affection, but perhaps it comes as near that as may be possible in the time to one of her temper."

"Now I hope you will permit me, Mr MacPhail," said Lenorme, who had been paying more attention to Malcolm than to his words, "to give a violent wrench to the conversation, and turn it upon yourself. You can't be surprised, and I hope you will not be annoyed, if I say you strike one as not altogether like your calling. No London groom I have ever spoken to, in the least resembles you? How is it?"

"I hope you don't mean to imply, sir, that I don't know my business," returned Malcolm, laughing.

"Anything but that. It were nearer the thing to say, that for all I know you may understand mine as well."

"I wish I did, sir. Except the pictures at Lossie House and those in Portland Place, I've never seen one in my life. About most of them I must say I find it hard to imagine what better the world is for them. Mr Graham says that no work that doesn't tend to make the world better makes it richer. If he were a heathen, he says, he would build a temple to Ses, the sister of Psyche."

"Ses?—I don't remember her," said Lenorme.

"The moth, sir;—'the moth and the rust,' you know."

"Yes, yes; now I know! Capital! Only more things may tend to make the world better than some people think.—Who is this Mr Graham of yours? He must be no common man.

"You are right there, sir; there is not another like him in the whole world, I believe."

And thereupon Malcolm set himself to give the painter an idea of the schoolmaster.

When they had talked about him for a little while,

"Well, all this accounts for your being a scholar," said Lenorme; "but——"

"I am little enough of that, sir," interrupted Malcolm. "Any Scotch boy that likes to learn finds the way open to him."

"I am aware of that. But were you really reading Epictetus when we left you in the park this morning?"

"Yes, sir: why not?"

"In the original?"

"Yes, sir; but not very readily. I am a poor Greek scholar. But my copy has a rough Latin translation on the opposite page, and that helps me out. It's not difficult. You would think nothing of it if it had been Cornelius Nepos, or Cordery's Colloquies. It's only a better, not a more difficult book.

"I don't know about that. It's not every one who can read Greek that can understand Epictetus. Tell me what you have learned from him?"

"That would be hard to do. A man is very ready to forget how he came first to think of the things he loves best. You see they are as much a necessity of your being as they are of the man's who thought them first. I can no more do without the truth than Plato. It is as much my needful food and as fully mine to possess as his. His having it, Mr Graham says, was for my sake as well as his own.—It's just like what Sir Thomas Browne says about the faces of those we love—that we cannot retain the idea of them because they are ourselves. Those that help the world must be served like their master and a good deal forgotten, I fancy. Of course they don't mind it.—I remember another passage I think says something to the same purpose—one in Epictetus himself," continued Malcolm, drawing the little book from his pocket and turning over the leaves, while Lenorme sat waiting, wondering, and careful not to interrupt him.

He turned to the forty-second chapter, and began to read from the Greek.

"I've forgotten all the Greek I ever had," said Lenorme.

Then Malcolm turned to the opposite page and began to read the Latin.

"Tut! tut!" said Lenorme, "I can't follow your Scotch pronunciation."

"That's a pity," said Malcolm: "it's the right way."

"I don't doubt it. You Scotch are always in the right! But just read it off in English—will you?"

Thus adjured, Malcolm read slowly and with choice of word and phrase :—

"'And if any one shall say unto thee, that thou knowest nothing, notwithstanding thou must not be vexed: then know thou that thou hast begun thy work.'—That is," explained Malcolm, "when you keep silence about principles in the presence of those that are incapable of understanding them.—'For the sheep also do not manifest to the shepherds how much they have eaten, by producing fodder; but, inwardly digesting their food, they produce outwardly wool and milk. And thou therefore set not forth principles before the unthinking, but the actions that result from the digestion of them.'—That last is not quite literal, but I think it's about right," concluded Malcolm, putting the book again in the breast pocket of his silver-buttoned coat. "—That's the passage I thought of, but I see now it won't apply. He speaks of not saying what you know; I spoke of forgetting where you got it."

"Come now," said Lenorme, growing more and more interested in his new acquaintance, "tell me something about your life. Account for yourself.—If you will make a friendship of it, you must do that."

"I will, sir," said Malcolm, and with the word began to tell him most things he could think of as bearing upon his mental history up to and after the time also when his birth was disclosed to him. In omitting that disclosure he believed he had without it quite accounted for himself. Through the whole recital he dwelt chiefly on the lessons and influences of the schoolmaster.

"Well, I must admit," said Lenorme when he had ended, "that you are no longer unintelligible, not to say incredible. You have had a splendid education, in which I hope you give the herring and Kelpie their due share."

He sat silently regarding him for a few moments. Then he said:

"I'll tell you what now: if I help you to buy a horse, you must help me to paint a picture."

"I don't know how I'm to do that," said Malcolm, "but if *you* do, that's enough. I shall only be too happy to do what I can."

"Then I'll tell you.—But you're not to tell *any*body: it's a secret.—I have discovered that there is no suitable portrait of Lady Lossie's father. It is a great pity. His brother and his father and grandfather are all in Portland Place, in Highland costume, as chiefs of their clan; his place only is vacant. Lady

Lossie, however, has in her possession one or two miniatures of him, which, although badly painted, I should think may give the outlines of his face and head with tolerable correctness. From the portraits of his predecessors, and from Lady Lossie herself, I gain some knowledge of what is common to the family; and from all together I hope to gather and paint what will be recognizable by her as a likeness of her father—which afterwards I hope to better by her remarks. These remarks I hope to get first from her feelings unadulterated by criticism, through the surprise of coming upon the picture suddenly; afterwards from her judgment at its leisure. Now I remember seeing you wait at table—the first time I saw you—in the Highland dress: will you come to me so dressed, and let me paint from you?"

"I'll do better than that, sir," cried Malcolm, eagerly. "I'll get up from Lossie House my lord's very dress that he wore when he went to court—his jewelled dirk, and Andrew Ferrara broadsword with the hilt of real silver. That'll greatly help your design upon my lady, for he dressed up in them all more than once just to please her."

"Thank you," said Lenorme very heartily; "that will be of immense advantage. Write at once."

"I will, sir.—Only I'm a bigger man than my—late master, and you must mind that."

"I'll see to it. You get the clothes, and all the rest of the accoutrements—rich with barbaric gems and gold, and——"

"Neither gems nor gold, sir;—honest Scotch cairngorms and plain silver," said Malcolm.

"I only quoted Milton," returned Lenorme.

"Then you should have quoted correctly, sir.—'Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,'—that's the line, and you can't better it. Mr Graham always pulled me up if I didn't quote correctly.—By-the-bye, sir, some say it's *kings barbaric*, but there's *barbaric gold* in Virgil."

"I dare say you are right," said Lenorme. "But you're far too learned for me."

"Don't make game of me, sir. I know two or three books pretty well, and when I get a chance I can't help talking about them. It's so seldom now I can get a mouthful of Milton. There's no cave here to go into, and roll the mimic thunder in your mouth. If the people here heard me reading loud out, they would call me mad. It's a mercy in this London, if a working-man get loneliness enough to say his prayers in!"

"You do say your prayers then?" asked Lenorme, looking at him curiously.

"Yes: don't you, sir? You had so much sense about the beasts I thought you must be a man that said his prayers."

Lenorme was silent. He was not altogether innocent of saying prayers; but of late years it had grown a more formal and gradually a rarer thing. One reason of this was that it had never come into his head that God cared about pictures, or had the slightest interest whether he painted well or ill. If a man's earnest calling, to which of necessity the greater part of his thought is given, is altogether dissociated in his mind from his religion, it is not wonderful that his prayers should by degrees wither and die. The question is whether they ever had much vitality. But one mighty negative was yet true of Lenorme: he had not got in his head, still less had he ever cherished in his heart, the thought that there was anything fine in disbelieving in a God, or anything contemptible in imagining communication with a being of grander essence than himself. That in which Socrates rejoiced with exultant humility, many a youth now-a-days thinks himself a fine fellow for casting from him with ignorant scorn.

A true conception of the conversation above recorded can hardly be had except my reader will take the trouble to imagine the contrast between the Scotch accent and inflection, the largeness and prolongation of vowel sounds, and, above all, the Scotch tone of Malcolm, and the pure, clear articulation, and decided utterance of the perfect London speech of Lenorme. It was something like the difference between the blank verse of Young and the prose of Burke.

The silence endured so long that Malcolm began to fear he had hurt his new friend, and thought it better to take his leave.

"I'll go and write to Mrs Courthope—that's the housekeeper, to-night, to send up the things at once. When would it be convenient for you to go and look at some horses with me, Mr Lenorme?" he said.

"I shall be at home all to-morrow," answered the painter "and ready to go with you any time you like to come for me."

As he spoke he held out his hand, and they parted like old friends.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A LADY.

The next morning, Malcolm took Kelpie into the park, and gave her a good breathing. He had thought to jump the rails, and let her have her head, but he found there were too many park-keepers and police about: he saw he could do little for her that way. He was turning home with her again when one of her evil fits came upon her, this time taking its first form in a sudden stiffening of every muscle: she stood stock-still with flaming eyes. I suspect we human beings know but little of the fierceness with which the vortices of passion rage in the more purely animal natures. This beginning he knew well would end in a wild paroxysm of rearing and plunging. He had more than once tried the exorcism of patience, sitting sedate upon her back until she chose to move; but on these occasions the tempest that followed had been of the very worst description; so that he had concluded it better to bring on the crisis, thereby sure at least to save time; and after he had adopted this mode with her, attacks of the sort, if no less violent, had certainly become fewer. The moment therefore that symptoms of an approaching fit showed themselves, he used his spiked heels with vigour. Upon this occasion he had a stiff tussle with her, but as usual gained the victory, and was riding slowly along the Row, Kelpie tossing up now her head now her heels in indignant protest against obedience in general and enforced obedience in particular, when a lady on horseback, who had come galloping from the opposite direction, with her groom behind her, pulled up, and lifted her hand with imperative grace: she had seen something of what had been going on. Malcolm reined in. But Kelpie, after her nature, was now as unwilling to stop as she had been before to proceed, and the fight began again, with some difference of movement and aspect, but the spurs once more playing a free part.

"Man! man!" cried the lady, in most musical reproof, "do you know what you are about?"

"It would be a bad job for her and me too if I did not, my lady," said Malcolm, whom her appearance and manner impressed with a conviction of rank, and as he spoke he smiled in the midst of the struggle: he seldom got angry with Kelpie. But the smile instead of taking from the apparent roughness of his speech, only made his conduct appear in the lady's eyes more cruel.

"How is it possible you can treat the poor animal so unkindly—and in cold blood too?" she said, and an indescribable tone of pleading ran through the rebuke. "Why, her poor sides are actually——" A shudder, and look of personal distress completed the sentence.

"You don't know what she is, my lady, or you would not think it necessary to intercede for her."

"But if she is naughty, is that any reason why you should be cruel?"

"No, my lady; but it is the best reason why I should try to make her good."

"You will never make her good that way."

"Improvement gives ground for hope," said Malcolm.

"But you must not treat a poor dumb animal as you would a responsible human being."

"She's not so very poor, my lady. She has all she wants, and does nothing to earn it—nothing to speak of, and nothing at all with good will. For her dumbness, that's a mercy. If she could speak she wouldn't be fit to live among decent people. But for that matter, if some one hadn't taken her in hand, dumb as she is, she would have been shot long ago."

"Better that than live with such usage."

"I don't think she would agree with you, my lady. My fear is that, for as cruel as it looks to your ladyship, take it altogether, she enjoys the fight. In any case, I am certain she has more regard for me than any other being in the universe."

"Who *can* have any regard for you," said the lady very gently, in utter mistake of his meaning, "if you have no command of your temper? You must learn to rule yourself first."

"That's true, my lady; and so long as my mare is not able to be a law to herself, I must be a law to her too."

"But have you never heard of the law of kindness? You could do so much more without the severity."

"With some natures I grant you, my lady, but not with such as she. Horse or man—they never show kindness till they have learned fear. Kelpie would have torn me to pieces before now if I had taken your way with her. But except I can do a great deal more with her yet she will be nothing better than a natural brute beast made to be taken and destroyed."

"The Bible again!" murmured the lady to herself. "Of how much cruelty has not that book to bear the blame!"

All this time Kelpie was trying hard to get at the lady's horse to bite him. But she did not see that. She was much too distressed—and was growing more and more so.

"I wish you would let my groom try her," she said, after a pitiful pause. "He's an older and more experienced man than you. He has children. He would show you what can be done by gentleness."

From Malcolm's words she had scarcely gathered even a false meaning—not a glimmer of his nature—not even a suspicion that he meant something. To her he was but a handsome, brutal young groom. From the world of thought and reasoning that lay behind his words, not an echo had reached her.

"It would be a great satisfaction to my old Adam to let him try her," said Malcolm.

"The Bible again!" said the lady to herself.

"But it would be murder," he added, "not knowing myself what experience he has had."

"I see," said the lady to herself, but loud enough for Malcolm to hear, for her tender-heartedness had made her both angry and unjust, "his self-conceit is equal to his cruelty—just what I might have expected!"

With the words she turned her horse's head and rode away, leaving a lump in Malcolm's throat.

"I wuss fowk"—he still spoke in Scotch in his own chamber—"wad du as they're tell't, an' no jeedge ane anither. I'm sure it's Kelpie's best chance o' salvation 'at I gang on wi' her. Stablemen wad ha'e had her brocken doon a'thegither by this time, an' life wad ha'e had little relish left."

It added hugely to the bitterness of being thus rebuked, that he had never in his life seen such a radiance of beauty's softest light as shone from the face and form of the reproving angel.—"Only she canna be an angel," he said to himself, "or she wad ha'e ken't better."

She was young—not more than twenty, tall and graceful, with a touch of the matronly, which she must have had even in childhood, for it belonged to her—so staid, so stately was she in all her grace. With her brown hair, her lily complexion, her blue-gray eyes, she was all of the moonlight and its shadows—even now, in the early morning, and angry. Her nose was so nearly perfect that one never thought of it. Her mouth was rather large, but had gained in value of shape, and in the expression of indwelling sweetness, with every line that carried it beyond the measure of smallness. Most little mouths are pretty, some even lovely, but not one have I seen beautiful. Her forehead was the sweetest of half-moons. Of those who knew her best some absolutely believed that a radiance resembling moonlight shimmered from its precious expanse. "Be ye angry and sin not," had always been a puzzle to Malcolm, who had, as I have said, inherited a certain Celtic fierceness; but now, even while he knew himself the object of the anger, he understood the word. It tried him sorely, however, that such gentleness and beauty should be unreasonable. Could it be that he should never have a chance of convincing her how mistaken she was concerning his treatment of Kelpie! What a celestial rosy red her face had glowed! and what summer lightnings had flashed up in her eyes, as if they had been the horizons of heavenly worlds up which flew the dreams that broke from the brain of a young sleeping goddess, to make the worlds glad also in the night of their slumber.

Something like this Malcolm felt: whoever saw her must feel as he had never felt before. He gazed after her long and earnestly.

"It's an awfu' thing to ha'e a wuman like that angert at ye!" he said to himself when at length she had disappeared, "—as bonny as she is angry! God be praised 'at he kens a'thing, an' 's no angert wi' ye for the luik o' a thing! But the wheel may come roon' again—wha kens? Ony gait I s' mak' the best o' Kelpie I can.—I won'er gien she kens Leddy Florimel! She's a heap mair boontifu' like in her beauty nor her. The man micht haud 's ain wi' an archangel 'at had a wuman like that to the wife o' 'm.—Hoots! I'll be wussin' I had had anither upbringin', 'at I micht ha' won a step nearer to the hem o' her garment! an' that wad be to deny him 'at made an' ordeen't me. I wull not du that. But I maun hae a crack wi' Maister Graham, anent things twa or three, just to haud me straucht, for I'm jist girnin' at bein' sae regairdit by sic a Revelation. Gien she had been an auld wife, I wad ha'e only lauchen: what for 's that? I doobt I'm no muckle mair rizzonable nor hersel'! The thing was this, I fancy: it was sae clear she spak frae no ill-natur', only frae pure humanity. She's a gran' ane yon, only some saft, I doobt."

For the lady, she rode away sadly strengthened in her doubts whether there could be a God in the world—not because there were in it such men as she took Malcolm for, but because such a lovely animal had fallen into his hands.

"It's a sair thing to be misjeedged," said Malcolm to himself as he put the demoness in her stall; "but it's no more than the Macker o' 's pits up wi' ilka hoor o' the day, an' says na a word. Eh, but God's unco quaiet! Sae lang as he kens till himsel' 'at he's a' richt, he lats fowk think 'at they like—till he has time to lat them ken better. Lord, mak' clean my hert within me, an' syne I'll care little for ony jeedgement but thine."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE PSYCHE.

It was a lovely day, but Florimel would not ride: Malcolm must go at once to Mr Lenorme; she would not go out again until she could have a choice of horses to follow her.

"Your Kelpie is all very well in Richmond Park, and I wish I were able to ride her myself, Malcolm, but she will never do in London."

His name sounded sweet on her lips, but somehow to-day, for the first time since he saw her first, he felt a strange sense of superiority in his protection of her: could it be because he had that morning looked unto a higher orb of creation? It mattered little to Malcolm's generous nature that the voice that issued therefrom had been one of unjust rebuke.

"Who knows, my lady," he answered his mistress, "but you may ride her some day! Give her a bit of sugar every time you see her—on your hand, so that she may take it with her lips, and not catch your fingers."

"You shall show me how," said Florimel, and gave him a note for Mr Lenorme.

When he came in sight of the river, there, almost opposite the painter's house, lay his own little yacht! He thought of Kelpie in the stable, saw Psyche floating like a swan in the reach, made two or three long strides, then sought to exhale the pride of life in thanksgiving.

The moment his arrival was announced to Lenorme, he came down and went with him, and in an hour or two they had found very much the sort of horse they wanted. Malcolm took him home for trial, and Florimel was pleased with him. The earl's opinion was not to be had, for he had hurt his shoulder when he fell from the rearing Kelpie the day before, and was confined to his room in Curzon Street.

In the evening Malcolm put on his yachter's uniform, and set out again for Chelsea. There he took a boat, and crossed the river to the yacht, which lay near the other side, in charge of an old salt whose acquaintance Blue Peter had made when lying below the bridges. On board he found all tidy and ship-shape. He dived into the cabin, lighted a candle, and made some measurements: all the little luxuries of the nest, carpets, cushions, curtains, and other things, were at Lossie House, having been removed when the Psyche was laid up for the winter:

he was going to replace them. And he was anxious to see whether he could not fulfil a desire he had once heard Florimel express to her father—that she had a bed on board, and could sleep there. He found it possible, and had soon contrived a berth: even a tiny state-room was within the limits of construction.

Returning to the deck, he was consulting Travers about a carpenter, when, to his astonishment, he saw young Davy, the boy he had brought from Duff Harbour, and whom he understood to have gone back with Blue Peter, gazing at him from before the mast.

"Gien ye please, Maister MacPhail," said Davy, and said no more.

"How on earth do *you* come to be here, you rascal?" said Malcolm. "Peter was to take you home with him!"

"I garred him think I was gauin'," answered the boy, scratching his red poll, which glowed in the dusk.

"I gave him your wages," said Malcolm.

"Ay, he tauld me that, but I loot them gang an' gae him the slip, an' wan ashore close ahint yersel', sir, jist as the smack set sail. I cudna gang ohn hed a word wi' yersel', sir, to see whether ye wadna lat me bide wi' ye, sir. I haena muckle wut, they tell me, sir, but gien I michtna aye be able to du what ye tell't me to du, I cud aye haud ohn dune what ye tell't me no to du."

The words of the boy pleased Malcolm more than he judged it wise to manifest. He looked hard at Davy. There was little to be seen in his face except the best and only thing—truth. It shone from his round pale-blue eyes; it conquered the self-assertion of his unhappy nose; it seemed to glow in every freckle of his sunburnt cheeks, as earnestly he returned Malcolm's gaze.

"But," said Malcolm, almost satisfied, "how is this, Travers? I never gave you any instructions about the boy."

"There's where it is, sir, answered Travers. "I seed the boy aboard before, and when he come aboard again, jest arter you left, I never as much as said to myself, It's all right. I axed him no questions, and he told me no lies."

"Gien ye please, sir," struck in Davy, "Maister Trahvers gied me my mait, an' I tuik it, 'cause I hed no sil'er to buy ony: I houp it wasna stealin', sir. An' gien ye wad keep me, ye cud tak it aff o' my wauges for three days."

"Look here, Davy," said Malcolm, turning sharp upon him, "can you swim?"

"Ay can I, sir,—weel that," answered Davy.

"Jump overboard then, and swim ashore," said Malcolm, pointing to the Chelsea bank.

The boy made two strides to the larboard gunwale, and would have been over the next instant, but Malcolm caught him by the shoulder.

"That'll do, Davy; I'll give you a chance, Davy," he said, "and if I get a good account of you from Travers, I'll rig you out like myself here."

"Thank you, sir," said Davy. "I s' du what I can to please ye, sir. An' gien ye wad sen' my wauges hame to my mither, sir, ye wad ken 'at I cudna be gauin' stravaguin', and drinkin' whan yer back was turn't."

"Well, I'll write to your mother, and see what she says," said Malcolm. "Now I want to tell you, both of you, that this yacht belongs to the Marchioness of Lossie, and I have the command of her, and I must have everything on board ship-shape, and as clean, Travers, as if she were a seventy-four. If there's the head of a nail visible, it must be as bright as silver. And everything must be at the word. The least hesitation, and I have done with that man. If Davy here had grumbled one mouthful, even on his way overboard, I wouldn't have kept him."

He then arranged that Travers was to go home that night, and bring with him the next morning an old carpenter friend of his. He would himself be down by seven o'clock to set him to work.

The result was that, before a fortnight was over, he had the cabin thoroughly fitted up, with all the luxuries it had formerly possessed, and as many more as he could think of—to compensate for the loss of the space occupied by the daintiest little state-room—a very jewel box for softness and richness and comfort. In the cabin, amongst the rest of his additions, he had fixed in a corner a set of tiny bookshelves, and filled them with what books he knew his sister liked, and some that he liked for her. It was not probable she would read in them much, he said to himself, but they wouldn't make the boat heel, and who could tell when a drop of celestial nepenthe might ooze from one or another of them! So there they stood, in their lovely colours, of morocco, russia, calf or vellum—types of the infinite rest in the midst of the ever restless—the types for ever tossed, but the rest remaining.

By that time also he had arranged with Travers and Davy a code of signals.

The day after Malcolm had his new hack, he rode him behind his mistress in the park, and nothing could be more decorous than the behaviour of both horse and groom. It was early, and in Rotten Row, to his delight, they met the lady of rebuke. She and Florimel pulled up simultaneously, greeted, and had a little talk. When they parted, and the lady came to pass Malcolm, whom she had not suspected, sitting a civilised horse in all serenity behind his mistress, she cast a quick second glance at him, and her fair face flushed with the red reflex of yesterday's anger. He expected her to turn at once and complain of him to her mistress, but to his disappointment, she rode on.

When they left the park, Florimel went down Constitution Hill, and turning westward, rode to Chelsea. As they approached Mr Lenorme's house, she stopped and said to Malcolm—

"I am going to run in and thank Mr Lenorme for the trouble he has been at about the horse. Which is the house?"

She pulled up at the gate. Malcolm dismounted, but before he could get near to assist her, she was already halfway up the walk—flying, and he was but in time to catch the rein of Abbot, already moving off, curious to know whether he was actually trusted alone. In about five minutes she came again, glancing about her all ways but behind, with a scared look, Malcolm thought. But she walked more slowly and statelily than usual down the path. In a moment Malcolm had her in the saddle, and she cantered away—past the hospital into Sloane Street, and across the park home. He said to himself, "She knows the way."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE SCHOOLMASTER.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM, the schoolmaster, was the son of a grieve, or farm-overseer, in the North of Scotland. By straining every nerve, his parents had succeeded in giving him a university education, the narrowness of whose scope was possibly favourable to the development of what genius, rare and shy, might lurk among the students. He had laboured well, and had gathered a good deal from books and lectures, but far more from the mines they guided him to discover in his own nature. In common with so many Scotch parents, his had cherished the most wretched as well as hopeless of all ambitions, seeing it presumes to work in a region into which *no* ambition can enter—I mean that of seeing their son a clergyman. In presbyter, curate, bishop, or cardinal, ambition can fare but as that of the creeping thing to build its nest in the topmost boughs of the cedar. Worse than that ; my simile is a poor one ; for the moment a thought of ambition is *cherished*, that moment the man is out of the kingdom. Their son with already a few glimmering insights, which had not yet begun to interfere with his acceptance of the doctrines of his church, made no opposition to their wish, but having qualified himself to the satisfaction of his superiors, at length ascended the pulpit to preach his first sermon.

The custom of the time as to preaching was a sort of compromise between reading a sermon and speaking extempore, a mode morally as well as artistically false : the preacher learned his sermon by rote, and repeated it—as much like the man he therein was not, and as little like the parrot he was, as he could. It is no wonder, in such an attempt, either that memory should fail a shy man, or assurance an honest man. In Mr Graham's case it was probably the former : the practice was universal, and he could hardly yet have begun to question it, so as to have had any conscience of evil. Blessedly, however, for his dawning truth and well-being, he failed—failed utterly—pitifully. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth ; his lips moved, but shaped no sound ; a deathly dew bathed his forehead ; his knees shook ; and he sank at last to the bottom of the chamber of his torture, whence, while his mother wept below, and his father clenched hands of despair beneath the tails of his Sunday coat, he was half led, half dragged down the steps by the bedral, shrunken together like one caught in a shameful deed, and with the ghastly look of him who has but just revived from the faint supervening on the agonies of the rack. Home they crept together, speechless and hopeless all three, to be thenceforth the contempt and not the envy of their fellow-parishioners. For if the vulgar feeling towards the home-born prophet is superciliousness, what must the sentence upon failure be in ungenerous natures, to which every downfall of another is an uplifting of themselves ! But Mr Graham's worth had gained him friends in the presbytery, and he was that same week appointed to the vacant school of another parish.

There it was not long before he made the acquaintance of Griselda Campbell, who was governess in the great house of the neighbourhood, and a love, not the less true that it was hopeless from the first, soon began to consume the chagrin of his failure, and substitute for it a more elevating sorrow :—for how could an embodied failure, to offer whose miserable self would be an insult, dare speak of love to one before whom his whole being sank worshipping. Silence was the sole armour of his privilege. So long as he was silent, the terrible arrow would never part from the bow of those sweet lips; he might love on, love ever, nor be grudged the bliss of such visions as to him, seated on its outer steps, might come from any chance opening of the heavenly gate. And Miss Campbell thought of him more kindly than he knew. But before long she accepted the offered situation of governess to Lady Annabel, the only child of the late marquis's elder brother, at that time himself marquis, and removed to Lossie House. There the late marquis fell in love with her, and persuaded her to a secret marriage. There also she became, in the absence of her husband, the mother of Malcolm. But the marquis of the time, jealous for the succession of his daughter, and fearing his brother might yet marry the mother of his child, contrived, with the assistance of the midwife, to remove the infant and persuade the mother that he was dead, and also to persuade his brother of the death of both mother and child; after which, imagining herself wilfully deserted by her husband, yet determined to endure shame rather than break the promise of secrecy she had given him, the poor lady accepted the hospitality of her distant relative, Miss Horn, and continued with her till she died.

When he learned where she had gone, Mr Graham seized a chance of change to Portlossie that occurred soon after, and when she became her cousin's guest, went to see her, was kindly received, and for twenty years lived in friendly relations with the two. It was not until after her death that he came to know the strange fact that the object of his calm unalterable devotion had been a wife all those years, and was the mother of his favourite pupil. About the same time he was dismissed from the school on the charge of heretical teaching, founded on certain religious conversations he had had with some of the fisher-people who sought his advice; and thereupon he had left the place, and gone to London, knowing it would be next to impossible to find or gather another school in Scotland after being thus branded. In London he hoped, one way or another, to avoid dying of cold or hunger, or in debt: that was very nearly the limit of his earthly ambition.

He had just one acquaintance in the whole mighty city, and no more. Him he had known in the days of his sojourn at King's College, where he had grown with him from bejan to magistrand. He was the son of a linen-draper in Aberdeen, and was a decent, good humoured fellow, who, if he had not distinguished, had never disgraced himself. His father, having somewhat influential business relations, and finding in him no leanings to a profession, bespoke the good offices of a certain large retail house in London, and sent him thither to learn the business. The result was that he had married a daughter of one of the partners, and become a partner himself. His old friend wrote to him at his shop in Oxford Street, and then went to see him at his house in Haverstock Hill.

He was shown into the library—in which were two mahogany cases with plate-glass doors, full of books, well cared for as to clothing and condition, and perfectly placid, as if never disturbed from one week's end to another. In a minute Mr Marshal entered—so changed that he could never have recognized him—still, however, a kind-hearted, genial man. He received his classfellow cordially and respectfully—referred merrily to old times, and begged to know how he was getting on, asked whether he had come to London with any special object, and invited him to dine with them on Sunday. He accepted the invitation, met him, according to agreement, at a certain chapel in Kentish Town, of which he was a deacon, and walked home with him and his wife.

They had but one of their family at home—the youngest son, whom his father was having educated for the dissenting ministry, in the full conviction that he was doing not a little for the truth, and justifying its cause before men, by devoting to its service the son of a man of standing and worldly means, whom he might have easily placed in a position to make money. The youth was of simple character and good inclination—ready to do what he saw to be right, but slow in putting to the question anything that interfered with his notions of laudable ambition, or justifiable self-interest. He was attending lectures at a dissenting college in the neighbourhood, for his father feared Oxford or Cambridge, not for his morals, but his opinions in regard to church and state.

The schoolmaster spent a few days in the house. His friend was generally in town, and his wife, regarding him as very primitive and hardly fit for what she counted society—the class, namely, that she herself represented, was patronising and condescending; but the young fellow, finding, to his surprise, that he knew a great deal more about his studies than he did himself, was first somewhat attracted and then somewhat influenced by him, so that at length an intimacy tending to friendship arose between them.

Mr Graham was not a little shocked to discover that his ideas in respect of the preacher's calling were of a very worldly kind. The notions of this fledgling of dissent differed from those of a clergyman of the same stamp in this:—the latter regards the church as a society with accumulated property for the use of its officers; the former regarded it as a community of communities, each possessing a preaching house which ought to be made commercially successful. Saving influences must emanate from it of course—but dissenting saving influences.

His mother was a partisan to a hideous extent. To hear her talk you would have thought she imagined the apostles the first dissenters, and that the main duty of every Christian soul was to battle for the victory of Congregationalism over Episcopacy, and Voluntaryism over State Endowment. Her every mode of thinking and acting was of a levelling common-place. With her, love was liking, duty something unpleasant—generally to other people, and kindness patronage. But she was just in money-matters, and her son too had every intention of being worthy of his hire, though wherein lay the value of the labour with which he thought to counterpoise that hire, it were hard to say.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE PREACHER.

The sermon Mr Graham heard at the chapel that Sunday morning in Kentish Town was not of an elevating, therefore not of a strengthening description. The pulpit was at that time in offer to the highest bidder—in orthodoxy, that is, combined with popular talent. The first object of the chapel's existence—I do not say in the minds of those who built it, for it was an old place, but certainly in the minds of those who now directed its affairs—was not to save its present congregation, but to gather a larger—ultimately that they might be saved, let us hope, but primarily that the drain upon the purses of those who were responsible for its rent and other outlays, might be lessened. Mr Masquar, therefore, to whom the post was a desirable one, had been mainly anxious that morning to prove his orthodoxy, and so commend his services. Not that in those days one heard so much of the dangers of heterodoxy: that monster was as yet but growling far off in the jungles of Germany; but certain whispers had been abroad concerning the preacher which he thought desirable to hush, especially as they were founded in truth. He had tested the power of heterodoxy to attract attention, but having found that the attention it did attract was not of a kind favourable to his wishes, had so skilfully remodelled his theories that, although to his former friends he declared them in substance unaltered, it was impossible any longer to distinguish them from the most uncompromising orthodoxy; and his sermon of that morning had tended neither to the love of God, the love of man, nor a hungering after righteousness—its aim being to disprove the reported heterodoxy of Jacob Masquar.

As they walked home, Mrs Marshal, addressing her husband in a tone of conjugal disapproval, said, with more force than delicacy,

"The pulpit is not the place to give a man to wash his dirty linen in."

"Well, you see, my love," answered her husband in a tone of apology, "people won't submit to be told their duty by mere students, and just at present there seems nobody else to be had. There's none in the market but old stagers and young colts—eh, Fred? But Mr Masquar is at least a man of experience."

"Of more than enough, perhaps," suggested his wife. "And the young ones must have their chance, else how are they to learn? You should have given the principal a hint. It is a most desirable thing that Frederick should preach a little oftener."

"They have it in turn, and it wouldn't do to favour one more than another."

"He could hand his guinea, or whatever they gave him, to the one whose turn it ought to have been, and that would set it all right."

At this point the silk-mercer, fearing that the dominie, as he called him, was silently disapproving, and willing therefore to change the subject, turned to him and said,

"Why shouldn't *you* give us a sermon, Graham?"

The schoolmaster laughed.

"Did you never hear," he said, "how I fell like Dagon on the threshold of the church, and have lain there ever since."

"What has that to do with it?" returned his friend, sorry that his forgetfulness should have caused a painful recollection. "That is ages ago, when you were little more than a boy. Seriously," he added, chiefly to cover his little indiscretion, "will you preach for us the Sunday after next?"

Deacons generally ask a man to preach *for* them.

"No," said Mr Graham.

But even as he said it, a something began to move in his heart—a something half of jealousy for God, half of pity for poor souls buffeted by such winds as had that morning been roaring, chaff-laden, about the church, while the grain fell all to the bottom of the pulpit. Something burned in him: was it the word that was as a fire in his bones, or was it a mere lust of talk? He thought for a moment.

"Have you any gatherings between Sundays?" he asked.

"Yes; every Wednesday evening," replied Mr Marshal. "And if you won't preach on Sunday, we shall announce to-night that next Wednesday a clergyman of the Church of Scotland will address the prayer meeting."

He was glad to get out of it so, for he was uneasy about his friend, both as to his nerve, which might fail him, and his Scotch oddities, which would not.

"That would be hardly true," said Mr Graham, "seeing I never got beyond a licence."

"Nobody here knows the difference between a licentiate and a placed minister; and if they did they would not care a straw. So we'll just say *clergyman.*"

"But I won't have it announced in any terms. Leave that alone, and I will try to speak at the prayer meeting."

"It won't be in the least worth your while except we announce it. You won't have a soul to hear you but the pew-openers, the woman that cleans the chapel, Mrs Marshal's washerwoman, and the old greengrocer we buy our vegetables from. We must really announce it."

"Then I won't do it. Just tell me—what would our Lord have said to Peter or John if they had told Him that they had been to synagogue and had been asked to speak, but had declined because there were only the pew-openers, the chapel-cleaner, a washerwoman, and a greengrocer present?"

"I said it only for your sake, Graham; you needn't take me up so sharply."

"And ra-a-ther irreverently—don't you think—excuse me, sir?" said Mrs Marshal very softly. But the very softness had a kind of jelly-fish sting in it.

"I think," rejoined the schoolmaster, indirectly replying, "we must be careful to show our reverence in a manner pleasing to our Lord. Now I cannot discover that he cares for any reverences but the shaping of our ways after his; and if you will show me a single instance of respect of persons in our Lord, I will press my petition no farther to be allowed to speak a word to your pew-openers, washerwoman, and greengrocer."

His entertainers were silent—the gentleman in the consciousness of deserved rebuke, the lady in offence.

Just then the latter bethought herself that their guest, belonging to the Scotch Church, was, if no Episcopalian, yet no dissenter, and that seemed to clear up to her the spirit of his disapproval.

"By all means, Mr Marshal," she said, "let your friend speak on the Wednesday evening. It would not be to his advantage to have it said that he occupied a dissenting pulpit. It will not be nearly such an exertion either; and if he is unaccustomed to speak to large congregations, he will find himself more comfortable with our usual week-evening one."

"I have never attempted to speak in public but once," rejoined Mr Graham, "and then I failed."

"Ah! that accounts for it," said his friend's wife, and the simplicity of his confession, while it proved him a simpleton, mollified her.

Thus it came that he spent the days between Sunday and Thursday in their house, and so made the acquaintance of young Marshal.

When his mother perceived their growing intimacy, she warned her son that their visitor belonged to an unscriptural and worldly community, and that notwithstanding his apparent guilelessness—deficiency indeed—he might yet use cunning arguments to draw him aside from the faith of his fathers. But the youth replied that, although in the firmness of his own position as a Congregationalist, he had tried to get the Scotchman into a conversation upon church-government, he had failed; the man smiled queerly and said nothing. But when a question of New Testament criticism arose, he came awake at once, and his little blue eyes gleamed like glow-worms.

"Take care, Frederick," said his mother. "The Scriptures are not to be treated like common books and subjected to human criticism."

"We must find out what they mean, I suppose, mother," said the youth.

"You're to take just the plain meaning that he that runneth may read," answered his mother.—"More than that no one has any business with. You've got to save your own soul first, and then the souls of your neighbours if they will let you; and for that reason you must cultivate, not a spirit of criticism, but the talents that attract people to the hearing of the Word. You have got a fine voice, and it will improve with judicious use. Your father is now on the outlook for a teacher of elocution to instruct you how to make the best of it, and speak with power on God's behalf."

When the afternoon of Wednesday began to draw towards the evening, there came on a mist, not a London fog, but a low wet cloud, which kept slowly condensing into rain; and as the hour of meeting drew nigh with the darkness, it grew worse. Mrs Marshal had forgotten all about the meeting and the schoolmaster: her husband was late, and she wanted her dinner. At twenty minutes past six, she came upon her guest in the hall, kneeling on the door-mat, first on one knee, then on the other, turning up the feet of his trousers.

"Why, Mr Graham," she said kindly, as he rose and proceeded to look for his cotton umbrella, easily discernible in the stand among the silk ones of the house, "you're never going out in a night like this?"

"I am going to the prayer-meeting, ma'am," he said.

"Nonsense! You'll be wet to the skin before you get half way."

"I promised, you may remember, ma'am, to talk a little to them."

"You only said so to my husband. You may be very glad, seeing it has turned out so wet, that I would not allow him to have it announced from the pulpit. There is not the slightest occasion for your going. Besides, you have not had your dinner."

"That's not of the slightest consequence, ma'am. A bit of bread and cheese before I go to bed is all I need to sustain nature, and fit me for understanding my proposition in Euclid. I have been in the habit, for the last few years, of reading one every night before I go to bed."

"We dissenters consider a chapter of the Bible the best thing to read before going to bed," said the lady, with a sustained voice.

"I keep that for the noontide of my perceptions—for mental high water," said the schoolmaster. "Euclid is good enough after supper. Not that I deny myself a small portion of the Word," he added with a smile, as he proceeded to open the door—"when I feel very hungry for it."

"There is no one expecting you," persisted the lady, who could ill endure not to have her own way, even when she did not care for the matter concerned. "Who will be the wiser or the worse if you stay at home?"

"My dear lady," returned the schoolmaster, "when I have on good grounds made up my mind to a thing, I always feel as if I had promised God to do it; and indeed it amounts to the same thing very nearly. Such a resolve then is not to be unmade except on equally good grounds with those upon which it was made. Having resolved to try whether I could not draw a little water of refreshment for souls which if not thirsting are but fainting the more, shall I allow a few drops of rain to prevent me?"

"Pray don't let me persuade you against your will," said his hostess, with a stately bend of her neck over her shoulder, as she turned into the drawing-room.

Her guest went out into the rain, asking himself by what theory of the will his hostess could justify such a phrase—too simple to see that she had only thrown it out, as the cuttlefish its ink, to cover her retreat.

But the weather had got a little into his brain: into his soul it was seldom allowed to intrude. He felt depressed and feeble and dull. But at the first corner he turned, he met a little breath of wind. It blew the rain in his face, and revived him a little, reminding him at the same time that he had not yet opened his umbrella. As he put it up he laughed.

"Here I am," he said to himself, "lance in hand, spurring to meet my dragon!"

Once when he used a similar expression, Malcolm had asked him what he meant by his dragon; "I mean," replied the schoolmaster, "that huge slug, *The Commonplace.* It is the wearifulest dragon to fight in the whole miscreation. Wound it as you may, the jelly-mass of the monster closes, and the dull one is himself again—feeding all the time so cunningly that scarce one of the victims whom he has swallowed suspects that he is but pabulum slowly digesting in the belly of the monster."

If the schoolmaster's dragon, spread abroad as he lies, a vague dilution, everywhere throughout human haunts, has yet any *head*-quarters, where else can they be than in such places as that to which he was now making his way to fight him? What can be fuller of the wearisome, depressing, beauty-blasting commonplace than a dissenting chapel in London, on the night of the weekly prayer-meeting, and that night a drizzly one? The few lights fill the lower part with a dull, yellow, steamy glare, while the vast galleries, possessed by an ugly twilight, yawn above like the dreary openings of a disconsolate eternity. The pulpit rises into the dim damp air, covered with brown holland, reminding one of desertion and charwomen, if not of a chamber of death and spiritual undertakers, who have shrouded and coffined the truth. Gaping, empty, unsightly, the place is the very skull of the monster himself—the fittest place of all wherein to encounter the great slug, and deal him one of those death blows which every sunrise, every repentance, every child-birth, every true love deals him. Every hour he receives the blow that kills, but he takes long to die, for every hour he is right carefully fed and cherished by a whole army of purveyors, including every trade and profession, but officered chiefly by divines and men of science.

When the dominie entered, all was still, and every light had a nimbus of illuminated vapour. There were hardly more than three present beyond the number Mr Marshal had given him to expect; and their faces, some grim, some grimy, most of them troubled, and none blissful, seemed the nervous ganglions of the monster whose faintly gelatinous bulk filled the place. He seated himself in a pew near the pulpit, communed with his own heart and was still. Presently the ministering deacon, a humbler one in the worldly sense than Mr Marshal, for he kept a small ironmongery shop in the next street to the chapel, entered, twirling the wet from his umbrella as he came along one of the passages intersecting the pews. Stepping up into the desk which cowered humbly at the foot of the pulpit, he stood erect, and cast his eyes around the small assembly. Discovering there no one that could lead in singing, he chose out and read one of the monster's favourite hymns, in which never a sparkle of thought or a glow of worship gave reason wherefore the holy words should have been carpentered together. Then he prayed aloud, and then first the monster found tongue, voice, articulation. If this was worship, surely it was the monster's own worship of itself! No God were better than one to whom such were fitting words of prayer. What passed in the man's soul, God forbid I should judge: I speak but of the words that reached the ears of men.

And over all the vast of London lay the monster, filling it like the night—not in churches and chapels only—in almost all theatres, and most houses—most of all in rich houses: everywhere he had a foot, a tail, a tentacle or two—everywhere suckers that drew the life-blood from the sickening and somnolent soul.

When the deacon, a little brown man, about five-and-thirty, had ended his prayer, he read another hymn of the same sort—one of such as form the bulk of most collections, and then looked meaningly at Mr Graham, whom he had seen in the chapel on Sunday with his brother deacon, and therefore judged one of consequence, who had come to the meeting with an object, and ought to be propitiated: he had intended speaking himself. After having thus for a moment regarded him,

"Would you favour us with a word of exhortation, sir?" he said, in a stage-like whisper.

Now the monster had by this time insinuated a hair-like sucker into the heart of the schoolmaster, and was busy. But at the word, as the Red-cross Knight when he heard Orgoglio in the wood staggered to meet him, he rose at once, and although his umbrella slipped and fell with a loud discomposing clatter, calmly approached the reading desk. To look at his outer man, this knight of the truth might have been the very high priest of the monster which, while he was sitting there, had been twisting his slimy, semi-electric, benumbing tendrils around his heart. His business was nevertheless to fight him, though to fight him in his own heart and that of other people at one and the same moment, he might well find hard work. And the loathly worm had this advantage over the knight, that it was the first time he had stood up to speak in public since his failure thirty years ago. That hour again for a moment overshadowed his spirit. It was a wavy harvest morning in a village of the north. A golden wind was blowing, and little white clouds flying aloft in the sunny blue. The church was full of well-known faces, upturned, listening, expectant, critical. The hour vanished in a slow mist of abject misery and shame. But had he not learned to rejoice over all dead hopes, and write *Te Deums* on their coffin-lids? And now he stood in dim light, in the vapour from damp garments, in dinginess and ugliness, with a sense of spiritual squalor and destitution in his very soul. He had tried to pray his own prayer while the deacon prayed his; but there had come to him no reviving—no message for this handful of dull souls—there were nine of them in all—and his own soul crouched hard and dull within his bosom. How to give them one deeper breath? How to make them know they were alive? Whence was his aid to come?

His aid was nearer than he knew. There were no hills to which he could lift his eyes, but help may hide in the valley as well as come down from the mountain, and he found his under the coal-scuttle bonnet of the woman that swept out and dusted the chapel. She was no interesting young widow. A life of labour and vanished children lay behind as well as before her. She was sixty years of age, seamed with the small-pox, and in every seam the dust and smoke of London had left a stain. She had a troubled eye, and a gaze that seemed to ask of the universe why it had given birth to her. But it was only her face that asked the question; her mind was too busy with the ever recurring enigma, which, answered this week, was still an enigma for the next—how she was to pay her rent—too busy to have any other question to ask. Or would she not rather have gone to sleep altogether, under the dreary fascination of the slug monster, had she not had a severe landlady, who *would* be paid punctually, or turn her out? Anyhow, every time and all the time she sat in the chapel, she was brooding over ways and means, calculating pence and shillings—the day's charing she had promised her, and the chances of more—mingling faint regrets over past indulgences—the extra half-pint of beer she drank on Saturday—the bit of cheese she bought on Monday. Of this face of care, revealing a spirit which Satan had bound, the schoolmaster caught sight,—caught from its commonness, its grimness, its defeature, inspiration and uplifting, for there he beheld the oppressed, down-trodden, mire-fouled humanity which the man in whom he believed had loved because it was his father's humanity divided into brothers, and had died straining to lift back to the bosom of that Father. Oh tale of horror and dreary monstrosity, if it be such indeed as the bulk of its priests on the one hand, and its enemies on the other represent it! Oh story of splendrous fate, of infinite resurrection and uplifting, of sun and breeze, of organ-blasts and exultation, for the heart of every man and woman, whatsoever the bitterness of its cark or the weight of its care, if it be such as the Book itself has held it from age to age!

It was the mere humanity of the woman, I say, and nothing in her individuality of what is commonly called the interesting, that ministered to the breaking of the schoolmaster's trance. "*Oh ye of little faith!*" were the first words that flew from his lips—he knew not whether uttered concerning himself or the charwoman the more; and at once he fell to speaking of him who said the words, and of the people that came to him and heard him gladly;—how this one, whom he described, must have felt, *Oh, if that be true!* how that one, whom also he described, must have said, *Now he means me!* and so laid bare the secrets of many hearts, until he had concluded all in the misery of being without a helper in the world, a prey to fear and selfishness and dismay. Then he told them how the Lord pledged himself for all their needs—meat and drink and clothes for the body, and God and love and truth for the soul, if only they would put them in the right order and seek the best first.

Next he spoke a parable to them—of a house and a father and his children. The children would not do what their father told them, and therefore began to keep out of his sight. After a while they began to say to each other that he must have gone out, it was so long since they had seen him—only they never went to look. And again after a time some of them began to say to each other that they did not believe they had ever had any father. But there were some who dared not say that—who thought they had a father somewhere in the house, and yet crept about in misery, sometimes hungry and often cold, fancying he was not friendly to them, when all the time it was they who were not friendly to him, and said to themselves he would not give them anything. They never went to knock at his door, or call to know if he were inside and would speak to them. And all the time there he was sitting sorrowful, listening and listening for some little hand to come knocking, and some little voice to come gently calling through the key-hole; for sorely did he long to take them to his bosom and give them everything. Only if he did that without their coming to him, they would not care for his love or him, would only care for the things he gave them, and soon would come to hate their brothers and sisters, and turn their own souls into hells, and the earth into a charnel of murder.

Ere he ended he was pleading with the charwoman to seek her father in his own room, tell him her troubles, do what he told her, and fear nothing. And while he spoke, lo! the dragon-slug had vanished; the ugly chapel was no longer the den of the hideous monster; it was but the dusky bottom of a glory shaft, adown which gazed the stars of the coming resurrection.

"The whole trouble is that we won't let God help us," said the preacher, and sat down.

A prayer from the greengrocer followed, in which he did seem to be feeling after God a little; and then the ironmonger pronounced the benediction, and all went—among the rest, Frederick Marshal, who had followed the schoolmaster, and now walked back with him to his father's, where he was to spend one night more.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE PORTRAIT.

Florimel had found her daring visit to Lenorme stranger and more fearful than she had expected: her courage was not quite so masterful as she had thought. The next day she got Mrs Barnardiston to meet her at the studio. But she contrived to be there first by some minutes, and her friend found her seated, and the painter looking as if he had fairly begun his morning's work. When she apologised for being late, Florimel said she supposed her groom had brought round the horses before his time; being ready, she had not looked at her watch. She was sharp on other people for telling stories--but had of late ceased to see any great harm in telling one to protect herself. The fact however had begun to present itself in those awful morning hours that seem a mingling of time and eternity, and she did not like the discovery that, since her intimacy with Lenorme, she had begun to tell lies: what would he say if he knew?

Malcolm found it dreary waiting in the street while she sat to the painter. He would not have minded it on Kelpie, for she was always occupation enough, but with only a couple of quiet horses to hold, it was dreary. He took to scrutinizing the faces that passed him, trying to understand them. To his surprise he found that almost everyone reminded him of somebody he had known before, though he could not always identify the likeness.

It was a pleasure to see his yacht lying so near him, and Davy on the deck, and to hear the blows of the hammer and the *swish* of the plane as the carpenter went on with the alterations to which he had set him, but he got tired of sharing in activity only with his ears and eyes. One thing he had by it, however, and that was—a good lesson in quiescent waiting—a grand thing for any man, and most of all for those in whom the active is strong.

The next day Florimel did not ride until after lunch, but took her maid with her to the studio, and Malcolm had a long morning with Kelpie. Once again he passed the beautiful lady in Rotten Row, but Kelpie was behaving in a most exemplary manner, and he could not tell whether she even saw him. I believe she thought her lecture had done him good. The day after that Lord Liftore was able to ride, and for some days Florimel and he rode in the park before dinner, when, as Malcolm followed on the new horse, he had to see his lordship make love to his sister, without being able to find the least colourable pretext of involuntary interference.

At length the parcel he had sent for from Lossie House arrived. He had explained to Mrs Courthope what he wanted the things for, and she had made no difficulty of sending them to the address he gave her. Lenorme had already begun the portrait, had indeed been working at it very busily, and was now quite ready for him to sit. The early morning being the only time a groom could contrive to spare—and that involved yet earlier attention to his horses, they arranged that Malcolm should be at the study every day by seven o'clock, until the painter's object was gained. So he mounted Kelpie at half-past six of a fine breezy spring morning, rode across Hyde Park and down Grosvenor Place, and so reached Chelsea, where he put up his mare in Lenorme's stable—fortunately large enough to admit of an empty stall between her and the painter's grand screw, else a battle frightful to relate might have fallen to my lot.

Nothing could have been more to Malcolm's mind than such a surpassing opportunity of learning with assurance what sort of man Lenorme was; and the relation that arose between them extended the sittings far beyond the number necessary for the object proposed. How the first of them passed I must recount with some detail.

As soon as he arrived, he was shown into the painter's bedroom, where lay the portmanteau he had carried thither himself the night before: out of it, with a strange mingling of pleasure and sadness, he now took the garments of his father's vanished state—the filibeg of the dark tartan of his clan, in which green predominated; the French coat of black velvet of Genoa, with silver buttons; the bonnet, which ought to have had an eagle's feather, but had only an aigrette of diamonds; the black sporran of long goat's hair, with the silver clasp; the silver-mounted dirk, with its appendages, set all with pale cairngorms nearly as good as oriental topazes; and the claymore of the renowned Andrew's forging, with its basket hilt of silver, and its black, silver-mounted sheath. He handled each with the reverence of a son. Having dressed in them, he drew himself up with not a little of the Celt's pleasure in fine clothes, and walked into the painting-room. Lenorme started with admiration of his figure, and wonder at the dignity of his carriage, while, mingled with these feelings, he was aware of an indescribable doubt, something to which he could give no name. He almost sprang at his palette and brushes: whether he succeeded with the likeness of the late marquis or not, it would be his own fault if he did not make a good picture! He painted eagerly, and they talked little, and only about things indifferent.

At length the painter said,

"Thank you. Now walk about the room while I spread a spadeful of paint: you must be tired standing."

Malcolm did as he was told, and walked straight up to the Temple of Isis, in which the painter had now long been at work on the goddess. He recognised his sister at once, but a sudden pinch of prudence checked the exclamation that had almost burst from his lips.

"What a beautiful picture!" he said. "What does it mean?—Surely it is Hermione coming to life, and Leontes dying of joy! But no; that would not fit. They are both too young, and——"

"You read Skakspere, I see," said Lenorme, "as well as Epictetus."

"I do—a good deal," answered Malcolm. "But please tell me what you painted this for."

Then Lenorme told him the parable of Novalis, and Malcolm saw what the poet meant. He stood staring at the picture, and Lenorme sat working away, but a little anxious—he hardly knew why: had he bethought himself he would have put the picture out of sight before Malcolm came.

"You wouldn't be offended if I made a remark, would you, Mr Lenorme?" said Malcolm at length.

"Certainly not," replied Lenorme, something afraid nevertheless of what might be coming.

"I don't know whether I can express what I mean," said Malcolm, "but I'll try. I could do it better in Scotch, I believe, but then you wouldn't understand me."

"I think I should," said Lenorme. "I spent six months in Edinburgh once."

"Ow ay! but ye see they dinna thraw the words there jist the same gait they du at Portlossie. Na, na! I maunna attemp' it."

"Hold, hold!" cried Lenorme. "I want to have your criticism. I don't understand a word you are saying. You must make the best you can of the English."

"I was only telling you in Scotch that I wouldn't try the Scotch," returned Malcolm. "Now I will try the English.—In the first place, then—but really it's very presumptuous of me, Mr Lenorme; and it may be that I am blind to something in the picture.——"

"Go on," said Lenorme impatiently.

"Don't you think then, that one of the first things you would look for in a goddess would be—what shall I call it?—an air of mystery?"

"That was so much involved in the very idea of Isis, in her especially, that they said she was always veiled, and no man had ever seen her face."

"That would greatly interfere with my notion of mystery," said Malcolm. "There must be revelation before mystery. I take it that mystery is what lies behind revelation; that which as yet revelation has not reached. You must see something—a part of something, before you can feel any sense of mystery about it. The Isis for ever veiled is the absolutely Unknown, not the Mysterious."

"But, you observe, the idea of the parable is different. According to that Isis is for ever unveiling, that is revealing herself in her works, chiefly in the women she creates, and then chiefly in each of them to the man who loves her."

"I see what you mean well enough; but not the less she remains the goddess, does she not?"

"Surely she does."

"And can a goddess ever reveal all she is and has?"

"Never."

"Then ought there not to be mystery about the face and form of your Isis on her pedestal?"

"Is it not there? Is there not mystery in the face and form of every woman that walks the earth?"

"Doubtless; but you desire—do you not?—to show that although this is the very lady the young man loved before ever he sought the shrine of the goddess, not the less is she the goddess Isis herself?"

"I do—or at least I ought; only—by Jove! you have already looked deeper into the whole thing than I."

"There may be things to account for that on both sides," said Malcolm. "But one word more to relieve my brain:—if you would embody the full meaning of the parable, you must not be content that the mystery is there; you must show in your painting that you feel it there; you must paint the invisible veil that no hand can lift, for there it is, and there it ever will be, though Isis herself raise it from morning to morning."

"How am I to do that?" said Lenorme, not that he did not see what Malcolm meant, or agree with it: he wanted to make him talk.

"How can I, who never drew a stroke, or painted anything but the gunnel of a boat, tell you that?" rejoined Malcolm. "It is your business. You must paint that veil, that mystery in the forehead, and in the eyes, and in the lips—yes, in the cheeks and the chin and the eyebrows and everywhere. You must make her say without saying it, that she knows oh! so much, if only she could make you understand it!—that she is all there for you, but the all is infinitely more than you can know. As she stands there now,——"

"I must interrupt you," cried Lenorme, "just to say that the picture is not finished yet."

"And yet I will finish my sentence, if you will allow me," returned Malcolm. "—As she stands there—the goddess—she looks only a beautiful young woman, with whom the young man spreading out his arms to her is very absolutely in love. There is the glow and the mystery of love in both their faces, and nothing more."

"And is not that enough?" said Lenorme.

"No," answered Malcolm. "And yet it may be too much," he added, "if you are going to hang it up where people will see it."

As he said this, he looked hard at the painter for a moment. The dark hue of Lenorme's cheek deepened; his brows lowered a little farther over the black wells of his eyes; and he painted on without answer.

"By Jove!" he said at length.

"Don't swear, Mr Lenorme," said Malcolm. "—Besides, that's my Lord Liftore's oath.—If *you* do, you will teach my lady to swear."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Lenorme, with offence plain enough in his tone.

Thereupon Malcolm told him how on one occasion, himself being present, the marquis her father happening to utter an imprecation, Lady Florimel took the first possible opportunity of using the very same words on her own account, much to the marquis's amusement and Malcolm's astonishment. But upon reflection he had come to see that she only wanted to cure her father of the bad habit.

The painter laughed heartily, but stopped all at once and said,

"It's enough to make any fellow swear though, to hear a—groom talk as you do about art."

"Have I the impudence? I didn't know it," said Malcolm, with some dismay. "I seemed to myself merely saying the obvious thing, the common sense, about the picture, on the ground of your own statement of your meaning in it. I am annoyed with myself if I have been talking of things I know nothing about."

"On the contrary, MacPhail, you are so entirely right in what you say, that I cannot for the life of me understand where or how you can have got it."

"Mr Graham used to talk to me about everything."

"Well, but he was only a country school-master."

"A good deal more than that, sir," said Malcolm, solemnly. "He is a disciple of him that knows everything. And now I think of it, I do believe that what I've been saying about your picture, I must have got from hearing him talk about *the* revelation, in which is included Isis herself, with her brother and all their train."

Lenorme held his peace. Malcolm had taken his place again unconsciously, and the painter was working hard, and looking very thoughtful. Malcolm went again to the picture.

"Hillo!" cried Lenorme, looking up and finding no object in the focus of his eyes.

Malcolm returned directly.

"There was just one thing I wanted to see," he said, "—whether the youth worshipping his goddess, had come into her presence *clean*."

"And what is your impression of him?" half murmured Lenorme, without lifting his head.

"The one that's painted *there*," answered Malcolm, "does look as if he might know that the least a goddess may claim of a worshipper is, that he should come into her presence pure enough to understand her purity. I came upon a fine phrase the other evening in your English prayer-book. I never looked into it before, but I found one lying on a book-stall, and it happened to open at the marriage service. There, amongst other good things, the bridegroom says: 'With my body I thee worship.'—'That's grand,' I said to myself. 'That's as it should be. The man whose body does not worship the woman he weds, should marry a harlot.' God bless Mr William Shakspere!—*he* knew that. I remember Mr Graham telling me once, before I had read the play, that the critics condemn *Measure for Measure* as failing in poetic justice. I know little about the critics, and care less, for a man who has to earn his bread and feed his soul as well, has enough to do with the books themselves without what people say about them; and Mr Graham would not tell me whether he thought the critics right or wrong; he wanted me to judge for myself. But when I came to read the play, I found, to my mind, a most absolute and splendid justice in it. They think, I suppose, that my lord Angelo should have been put to death. It just reveals the low breed of them; they think death the worst thing, therefore the greatest punishment. But Angelo prays for death, that it may hide him from his shame: it is too good for him, and he shall *not* have it. He must live to remove the shame from Mariana. And then see how Lucio is served!"

While Malcolm talked, Lenorme went on painting diligently, listening and saying nothing. When he had thus ended, a pause of some duration followed.

"A goddess has a right to claim that one thing—has she not, Mr Lenorme?" said Malcolm at length, winding up a silent train of thought aloud.

"What thing?" asked Lenorme, still without lifting his head.

"Purity in the arms a man holds out to her," answered Malcolm.

"Certainly," replied Lenorme, with a sort of mechanical absoluteness.

"And according to your picture, every woman whom a man loves is a goddess—*the* goddess of nature?"

"Certainly;—but what *are* you driving at? I can't paint for you. There you stand," he went on, half angrily, "as if you were Socrates himself, driving some poor Athenian buck into the corner of his deserts! *I* don't deserve any such insinuations, I would have you know."

"I am making none, sir. I dare never insinuate except I were prepared to charge. But I have told you I was bred up a fisher-lad, and partly among the fishers, to begin with, I half learned, half discovered things that tended to give me what some would count severe notions: I count them common sense. Then, as you know, I went into service, and in that position it is easy enough to gather that many people hold very loose and very nasty notions about some things; so I just wanted to see how you felt about such. If I had a sister now, and saw a man coming to woo her, all beclotted with puddle-filth—or if I knew that he had just left some woman as good as she, crying eyes and heart out over his child—I don't know that I could keep my hands off him—at least if I feared she might take him. What do you think now? Mightn't it be a righteous thing to throttle the scum and be hanged for it?"

"Well," said Lenorme, "I don't know why I should justify myself, especially where no charge is made, MacPhail; and I don't know why to you any more than another man; but at this moment I am weak, or egotistic, or sympathetic enough to wish you to understand that, so far as the poor matter of one virtue goes, I might without remorse act Sir Galahad in a play."

"Now you are beyond me," said Malcolm. "I don't know what you mean."

So Lenorme had to tell him the old Armoric tale which Tennyson has since rendered so lovelily, for, amongst artists at least, he was one of the earlier burrowers in the British legends. And as he told it, in a half sullen kind of way, the heart of the young marquis glowed within him, and he vowed to himself that Lenorme and no other should marry his sister. But, lest he should reveal more emotion than the obvious occasion justified, he restrained speech, and again silence fell, during which Lenorme was painting furiously.

"Confound it!" he cried at last, and sprang to his feet, but without taking his eyes from his picture, "what have I been doing all this time but making a portrait of you, MacPhail, and forgetting what you were there for! And yet," he went on, hesitating and catching up the miniature, "I *have* got a certain likeness! Yes, it must be so, for I see in it also a certain look of Lady Lossie. Well! I suppose a man can't altogether help what he paints any more than what he dreams. That will do for this morning, anyhow, I think, MacPhail. Make haste and put on your own clothes, and come into the next room to breakfast. You must be tired with standing so long.

"It *is* about the hardest work I ever tried," answered Malcolm; "but I doubt if I am as tired as Kelpie. I've been listening for the last half hour to hear the stalls flying."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### AN EVIL OMEN.

FLORIMEL was beginning to understand that the shield of the portrait was not large enough to cover many more visits to the studio. Still she must and would venture; and should anything be said, there at least was the portrait. For some weeks it had been all but finished, was never off its easel, and always showed a touch of wet paint somewhere—he kept the last of it lingering, ready to prove itself almost yet not altogether finished. What was to follow its absolute completion, neither of them could tell. The worst of it was that their thoughts about it differed discordantly. Florimel not unfrequently regarded the rupture of their intimacy as a thing not undesirable—this chiefly after such a talk with Lady Bellair as had been illustrated by some tale of misalliance or scandal between high or low, of which kind of provision for age the bold-faced countess had a large store: her memory was little better than an ashpit of scandal. Amongst other biographical scraps one day she produced the case of a certain earl's daughter, who, having disgraced herself by marrying a low fellow—an artist, she believed—was as a matter of course neglected by the man whom, in accepting him, she had taught to despise her, and, before a twelvemonth was over—her family finding it impossible to hold communication with her—was actually seen by her late maid scrubbing her own floor.

"Why couldn't she leave it dirty?" said Florimel.

"Why indeed," returned Lady Bellair, "but that people sink to their fortunes! Blue blood won't keep them out of the gutter."

The remark was true, but of more general application than she intended, seeing she herself was in the gutter and did not know it. She spoke only of what followed on marriage beneath one's natal position, than which she declared there was nothing worse a woman of rank could do."

"She may get over anything but that," she would say, believing, but not saying, that she spoke from experience.

Was it part of the late marquis's purgatory to see now, as the natural result of the sins of his youth, the daughter whose innocence was dear to him exposed to all the undermining influences of this good-natured but low-moralled woman, whose ideas of the most mysterious relations of humanity were in no respect higher than those of a class which must not even be mentioned in my pages? At such tales the high-born heart would flutter in Florimel's bosom, beat itself against its bars, turn sick at the sight of its danger, imagine it had been cherishing a crime, and resolve—soon—before very long—at length—finally—to break so far at least with the painter as to limit their intercourse to the radiation of her power across a dinner-table, the rhythmic heaving of their two hearts at a dance, or the quiet occasional talk in a corner, when the looks of each would reveal to the other that they knew themselves the martyrs of a cruel and inexorable law. It must be remembered that she had had no mother since her childhood, that she was now but a girl, and that the passion of a girl to that of a woman is "as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine." Of genuine love she had little more than enough to serve as salt to the passion; and passion, however bewitching, yea, entrancing a condition, may yet be of more worth than that induced by opium or hashish, and a capacity for it may be conjoined with anything or everything contemptible and unmanly or unwomanly. In Florimel's case, however, there was chiefly much of the childish in it. Definitely separated from Lenorme, she would have been merry again in a fortnight; and yet, though she half knew this herself, and at the same time was more than half ashamed of the whole affair, she did not give it up—would not—only intended by and by to let it go, and meantime gave—occasionally—pretty free flutter to the half grown wings of her fancy.

Her liking for the painter had therefore, not unnaturally, its fits. It was subject in a measure to the nature of the engagements she had—that is, to the degree of pleasure she expected from them; it was subject, as we have seen, to skilful battery from the guns of her chaperon's entrenchment; and more than to either was it subject to those delicate changes of condition which in the microcosm are as frequent, and as varied both in kind and degree, as in the macrocosm. The spirit has its risings and settings of sun and moon, its seasons, its clouds and stars, its solstices, its tides, its winds, its storms, its earthquakes—infinite vitality in endless fluctuation. To rule these changes, Florimel had neither the power that comes of love, nor the strength that comes of obedience. What of conscience she had was not yet conscience toward God, which is the guide to freedom, but conscience toward society, which is the slave of a fool. It was no wonder then that Lenorme, believing—hoping she loved him, should find her hard to understand. He said *hard*, but sometimes he meant *impossible*. He loved as a man loves who has thought seriously, speculated, tried to understand; whose love therefore is consistent with itself, harmonious with its nature and history, changing only in form and growth, never in substance and character. Hence the idea of Florimel became in his mind the centre of perplexing thought; the unrest of her being metamorphosed on the way, passed over into his, and troubled him sorely. Neither was his mind altogether free of the dread of reproach. For self-reproach he could find little or no ground, seeing that to pity her much for the loss of consideration her marriage with him would involve, would be to undervalue the honesty of his love and the worth of his art; and indeed her position was so independently based that she could not lose it even by marrying one who had not the social standing of a brewer or a stockbroker; but his pride was uneasy under the foreseen criticism that his selfishness had taken advantage of her youth and inexperience to work on the mind of an ignorant girl —a criticism not likely to be the less indignant that those who passed it would, without a shadow of compunction, have handed her over, body, soul, and goods, to one of their own order, had he belonged to the very canaille of the race.

The painter was not merely in love with Florimel: he loved her. I will not say that he was in no degree dazzled by her rank, or that he felt no triumph, as a social nomad camping on the No-man's-land of society, at the thought of the justification of the human against the conventional, in his scaling of the giddy heights of superiority, and, on one of its topmost peaks, taking from her nest that rare bird in the earth, a landed and titled marchioness. But such thoughts were only changing hues on the feathers of his love, which itself was a mighty bird with great and yet growing wings.

A day or two passed before Florimel went again to the studio —accompanied, notwithstanding Lenorme's warning and her own doubt, yet again by her maid, a woman, unhappily, of Lady Bellair's finding. At Lossie House, Malcolm had felt a repugnance to her, both moral and physical. When first he heard her name, one of the servants speaking of her as Miss Caley, he took it for Scaley, and if that was not her name, yet scaly was her nature.

This time Florimel rode to Chelsea with Malcolm, having directed Caley to meet her there; and, the one designing to be a little early, and the other to be a little late, two results naturally followed—first, that the lovers had a few minutes alone; and second, that when Caley crept in, noiseless and unannounced as a cat, she had her desire, and saw the painter's arm round Florimel's waist, and her head on his bosom. Still more to her contentment, not hearing, they did not see her, and she crept out again quietly as she had entered: it would of course be to her advantage to let them know that she had seen, and that they were in her power, but it might be still more to her advantage to conceal the fact so long as there was a chance of additional discovery in the same direction. Through the success of her trick it came about that Malcolm, chancing to look up from Honour's back to the room where he always breakfasted with his new friend, saw in one of the windows, as in a picture, a face radiant with such an expression as that of the woman-headed snake might have worn when he saw Adam take the apple from the hand of Eve.

Caley was of the common class of servants in this, that she considered service servitude, and took her amends in selfishness: she was unlike them in this, that while false to her employers, she made no common cause with her fellows against them—regarded and sought none but her own ends. Her one thought was to make the most of her position; for that, to gain influence with, and, if it might be, power over her mistress; and, thereto, first of all, to find out whether she had a secret: she had now discovered not merely that she had one, but the secret itself! She was clever, greedy, cunning; equally capable, according to the faculty with which she might be matched, of duping or of being duped. She rather liked her mistress, but watched her in the interests of Lady Bellair. She had a fancy for the earl, a natural dislike for Malcolm which she concealed in distant politeness, and for all the rest of the house, indifference. As to her person, she had a neat oval face, thin and sallow, in expression subacid; a lithe, rather graceful figure, and hands too long, with fingers almost too tapering—of which hands and fingers she was very careful, contemplating them in secret with a regard amounting almost to reverence: they were her sole witnesses to a descent in which she believed, but of which she had no other shadow of proof.

Caley's face, then, with its unsaintly illumination, gave Malcolm something to think about as he sat there upon Honour, the new horse. Clearly she had had a triumph: what could it be? The nature of the woman was not altogether unknown to him even from the first, and he could not for months go on meeting her occasionally in passages and on stairs without learning to understand his own instinctive dislike: it was plain the triumph was not in good. It was plain too that it was in something which had that very moment occurred, and could hardly have to do with anyone but her mistress. Then her being in that room revealed more. They would never have sent her out of the study, and so put themselves in her power. She had gone into the house but a moment before, a minute or two behind her mistress, and he knew with what a cat-like step she went about: she had surprised them—discovered how matters stood between her mistress and the painter! He saw everything—almost as it had taken place. She had seen without being seen, and had retreated with her prize! Florimel was then in the woman's power: what was he to do? He must at least let her gather what warning she could from the tale of what he had seen.

Once arrived at a resolve, Malcolm never lost time. They had turned but one corner on their way home, when he rode up to her.

"Please, my lady," he began.

But the same instant Florimel was pulling up.

"Malcolm," she said, "I have left my pocket-handkerchief. I must go back for it."

As she spoke, she turned her horse's head. But Malcolm, dreading lest Caley should yet be lingering, would not allow her to expose herself to a greater danger than she knew.

"Before you go, my lady, I must tell you something I happened to see while I waited with the horses," he said.

The earnestness of his tone struck Florimel. She looked at him with eyes a little wider, and waited to hear.

"I happened to look up at the drawing-room windows, my lady, and Caley came to one of them with *such* a look on her face! I can't exactly describe it to you, my lady, but——"

"Why do you tell me?" interrupted his mistress, with absolute composure, and hard, questioning eyes.

But she had drawn herself up in the saddle. Then, before he could reply, a flash of thought seemed to cross her face with a quick single motion of her eyebrows, and it was instantly altered and thoughtful. She seemed to have suddenly perceived some cause for taking a mild interest in his communication.

"But it cannot be, Malcolm," she said, in quite a changed tone. "You must have taken someone else for her. She never left the studio all the time I was there."

"It was immediately after her arrival, my lady. She went in about two minutes after your ladyship, and could not have had *much* more than time to go upstairs when I saw her come to the window. I felt bound to tell your ladyship."

"Thank you, Malcolm," returned Florimel, kindly. "You did right to tell me,—but—it's of no consequence. Mr Lenorme's housekeeper and she must have been talking about something."

But her eyebrows were now thoughtfully contracted over her eyes.

"There had been no time for that, I think, my lady," said Malcolm.

Florimel turned again and rode on, saying no more about the handkerchief. Malcolm saw that he had succeeded in warning her, and was glad. But had he foreseen to what it would lead, he would hardly have done it.

Florimel was indeed very uneasy. She could not help strongly suspecting that she had betrayed herself to one who, if not an intentional spy, would yet be ready enough to make a spy's use of anything she might have picked up. What was to be done? It was now too late to think of getting rid of her: that would be but her signal to disclose whatever she had seen, and so not merely enjoy a sweet revenge, but account with clear satisfactoriness for her dismissal. What would not Florimel now have given for some one who could sympathise with her and yet counsel her! She was afraid to venture another meeting with Lenorme, and besides was not a little shy of the advantage the discovery would give him in pressing her to marry him. And now first she began to feel as if her sins were going to find her out.

A day or two passed in alternating psychical flaws and fogs—with poor glints of sunshine between. She watched her maid, but her maid knew it, and discovered no change in her manner or behaviour. Weary of observation she was gradually settling into her former security, when Caley began to drop hints that alarmed her. Might it not be altogether the safest thing to take her into confidence? It would be such a relief she thought, to have a woman she could talk to! The result was that she began to lift a corner of the veil that hid her trouble; the woman encouraged her, and at length the silly girl threw her arms round the scaly one's neck, much to that person's satisfaction, and told her that she loved Mr Lenorme. She knew of course, she said, that she could not marry him. She was only waiting a fit opportunity to free herself from a connection which, however delightful, she was unable to justify. How the maid nterpreted her confession, I do not care to enquire very closely, ut anyhow it was in a manner that promised much to her after-nfluence. I hasten over this part of Florimel's history, for that onfession to Caley was perhaps the one thing in her life she had most reason to be ashamed of, for she was therein false to the being she thought she loved best in the world. Could Lenorme have known her capable of unbosoming herself to such a woman, it would almost have slain the love he bore her. The notions of that odd-and-end sort of person, who made his livelihood by spreading paint, would have been too hideously shocked by the shadow of an intimacy between his love and such as she.

Caley first comforted the weeping girl, and then began to insinuate encouragement. She must indeed give him up—there was no help for that; but neither was there any necessity for doing so all at once. Mr Lenorme was a beautiful man, and any woman might be proud to be loved by him. She must take her time to it. She might trust her. And so on and on—for she was as vulgar-minded as the worst of those whom ladies endure about their persons, handling their hair, and having access to more of their lock-fast places than they would willingly imagine.

The first result was that, on the pretext of bidding him farewell, and convincing him that he and she must meet no more, fate and fortune, society and duty being all alike against their happiness—I mean on that pretext to herself, the only one to be deceived by it—Florimel arranged with her woman one evening to go the next morning to the studio: she knew the painter to be an early riser, and always at his work before eight o'clock. But although she tried to imagine she had persuaded herself to say farewell, certainly she had not yet brought her mind to any ripeness of resolve in the matter.

At seven o'clock in the morning, the marchioness habited like a housemaid, they slipped out by the front door, turned the corners of two streets, found a hackney coach waiting for them, and arrived in due time at the painter's abode.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### A QUARREL.

When the door opened and Florimel glided in, the painter sprang to his feet to welcome her, and she flew softly, soundless as a moth, into his arms; for the study being large and full of things, she was not aware of the presence of Malcolm. From behind a picture on an easel, he saw them meet, but shrinking from being an open witness to their secret, and also from being discovered in his father's clothes by the sister who knew him only as a servant, he instantly sought escape. Nor was it hard to find, for near where he stood was a door opening into a small intermediate chamber, communicating with the drawing-room, and by it he fled, intending to pass through to Lenorme's bedroom, and change his clothes. With noiseless stride he hurried away, but could not help hearing a few passionate words that escaped his sister's lips before Lenorme could warn her that they were not alone—words which, it seemed to him, could come only from a heart whose very pulse was devotion.

"How *can* I live without you, Raoul?" said the girl as she clung to him.

Lenorme gave an uneasy glance behind him, saw Malcolm disappear, and answered,

"I hope you will never try, my darling."

"Oh, but you know this can't last," she returned, with playfully affected authority. "It must come to an end. They will interfere."

"Who can? Who will dare?" said the painter with confidence.

"People will. We had better stop it ourselves—before it all comes out, and we are shamed," said Florimel, now with perfect seriousness.

"Shamed!" cried Lenorme. "—Well, if you can't help being ashamed of me—and perhaps, as you have been brought up, you can't—do you not then love me enough to encounter a little shame for my sake? I should welcome worlds of such for yours?"

Florimel was silent. She kept her face hidden on his shoulder, but was already halfway to a quarrel.

"You don't love me, Florimel!" he said, after a pause, little thinking how nearly true were the words.

"Well, suppose I don't!" she cried, half defiantly, half merrily; and drawing herself from him, she stepped back two paces, and looked at him with saucy eyes, in which burned two little flames of displeasure, that seemed to shoot up from the red spots glowing upon her cheeks. Lenorme looked at her. He had often seen her like this before, and knew that the shell was charged and the fuse lighted. But within lay a mixture even more explosive than he suspected; for not merely was there more of shame and fear and perplexity mingled with her love than he understood, but she was conscious of having now been false to him, and that rendered her temper dangerous.

Lenorme had already suffered severely from the fluctuations of her moods. They had been almost too much for him. He could endure them, he thought, to all eternity, if he had her to himself, safe and sure; but the confidence to which he rose every now and then that she would one day be his, just as often failed him, rudely shaken by some new symptom of what almost seemed like cherished inconstancy. If after all she should forsake him! It was impossible, but she might. If even that should come, he was too much of a man to imagine anything but a stern encounter of the inevitable, and he knew he would survive it; but he knew also that life could never be the same again; that for a season work would be impossible—the kind of work he had hitherto believed his own rendered for ever impossible perhaps, and his art degraded to the mere earning of a living. At best he would have to die and be buried and rise again before existence could become endurable under the new squalid condition of life without her. It was no wonder then if her behaviour sometimes angered him; for even against a Will o' the Wisp that has enticed us into a swamp, a glow of foolish indignation will spring up. And now a black fire in his eyes answered the blue flash in hers; and the difference suggests the diversity of their loves: hers might vanish in fierce explosion, his would go on burning like a coal mine. A word of indignant expostulation rose to his lips, but a thought came that repressed it. He took her hand, and led her—the wonder was that she yielded, for she had seen the glow in his eyes, and the fuse of her own anger burned faster; but she did yield, partly from curiosity, and followed where he pleased—her hand lying dead in his. It was but to the other end of the room he led her, to the picture of her father, now all but finished. Why he did so, he would have found it hard to say. Perhaps the Genius that lies under the consciousness forefelt a catastrophe, and urged him to give his gift ere giving should be impossible.

Malcolm stepped into the drawing-room, where the table was laid as usual for breakfast: there stood Caley, helping herself to a spoonful of honey from Hymettus. At his entrance she started violently, and her sallow face grew earthy. For some seconds she stood motionless, unable to take her eyes off the apparition, as it seemed to her, of the late marquis, in wrath at her encouragement of his daughter in disgraceful courses. Malcolm, supposing only she was ashamed of herself, took no farther notice of her, and walked deliberately towards the other door. Ere he reached it she knew him. Burning with the combined ires of fright and shame, conscious also that, by the one little contemptible act of greed in which he had surprised her, she had justified the aversion which her woman-instinct had from the first recognized in him, she darted to the door, stood with her back against it, and faced him flaming.

"So!" she cried, "this is how my lady's kindness is abused! The insolence! Her groom goes and sits for his portrait in her father's court-dress!"

As she ceased, all the latent vulgarity of her nature broke loose, and with a contracted *pff* she seized her thin nose between her thumb and fore-finger, to the indication that an evil odour of fish interpenetrated her atmosphere, and must at the moment be defiling the garments of the dead marquis.

"My lady shall know of this," she concluded, with a vicious clenching of her teeth, and two or three nods of her neat head.

Malcolm stood regarding her with a coolness that yet inflamed her wrath. He could not help smiling at the reaction of shame in indignation. Had her anger been but a passing flame, that smile would have turned it into enduring hate. She hissed in his face.

"Go and have the first word," he said; "only leave the door and let me pass."

"Let you pass indeed! What would you pass for?—The bastard of old Lord James and a married woman!—I don't care *that* for you." And she snapped her fingers in his face.

Malcolm turned from her and went to the window, taking a newspaper from the breakfast table as he passed, and there sat down to read until the way should be clear. Carried beyond herself by his utter indifference, Caley darted from the room and went straight into the study.

Lenorme led Florimel in front of the picture. She gave a great start, and turned and stared pallid at the painter. The effect upon her was such as he had not foreseen, and the words she uttered were not such as he could have hoped to hear.

"What would *he* think of me if he knew?" she cried, clasping her hands in agony.

That moment Caley burst into the room, her eyes lamping like a cat's.

"My lady!" she shrieked, "there's MacPhail, the groom, my lady, dressed up in your honoured father's bee-utiful clo'es as he always wore when he went to dine with the Prince! And, please, my lady, he's that rude I could 'ardly keep my 'ands off him."

Florimel flashed a dagger of question in Lenorme's eyes. The painter drew himself up.

"It was at my request, Lady Lossie," he said.

"Indeed!" returned Florimel, in high scorn, and glanced again at the picture.

"I see!" she went on. "How could I be such an idiot! It was my groom's, not my father's likeness you meant to surprise me with!"

Her eyes flashed as if she would annihilate him.

"I have worked hard in the hope of giving you pleasure, Lady Lossie," said the painter, with wounded dignity.

"And you have failed," she adjoined cruelly.

The painter took the miniature after which he had been working, from a table near, handed it to her with a proud obeisance, and the same moment dashed a brushful of dark paint across the face of the picture.

"Thank you, sir," said Florimel, and for a moment felt as if she hated him.

She turned away and walked from the study. The door of the drawing-room was open, and Caley stood by the side of it. Florimel, too angry to consider what she was about, walked in: there sat Malcolm in the window, in her father's clothes, and his very attitude, reading the newspaper. He did not hear her enter. He had been waiting till he could reach the bed-room unseen by her, for he knew from the sound of the voices that the study door was open. Her anger rose yet higher at the sight.

"Leave the room," she said.

He started to his feet, and now perceived that his sister was in the dress of a servant. He took one step forward and stood—a little mazed—gorgeous in dress and arms of price, before his mistress in the cotton gown of a housemaid.

"Take those clothes off instantly," said Florimel slowly, replacing wrath with haughtiness as well as she might.

Malcolm turned to the door without a word. He saw that things had gone wrong where most he would have wished them go right.

"I'll see to them being well aired, my lady," said Caley, with sibilant indignation.

Malcolm went to the study. The painter sat before the picture of the marquis, with his elbows on his knees, and his head between his hands.

"Mr Lenorme," said Malcolm, approaching him gently.

"Oh, go away," said Lenorme, without raising his head. "I can't bear the sight of you yet."

Malcolm obeyed, a little smile playing about the corners of his mouth. Caley saw it as he passed, and hated him yet worse. He was in his own clothes, booted and belted, in two minutes. Three sufficed to replace his father's garments in the portmanteau, and in three more he and Kelpie went plunging past his mistress and her maid as they drove home in their lumbering vehicle.

"The insolence of the fellow!" said Caley, loud enough for her mistress to hear notwithstanding the noise of the rattling windows. "A pretty pass we are come to!"

But already Florimel's mood had begun to change. She felt that she had done her best to alienate men on whom she could depend, and that she had chosen for a confidante one whom she had no ground for trusting.

She got safe and unseen to her room; and Caley believed she had only to improve the advantage she had now gained.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE TWO DAIMONS.

Things had taken a turn that was not to Malcolm's satisfaction, and his thoughts were as busy all the way home as Kelpie would allow. He had ardently desired that his sister should be thoroughly in love with Lenorme, for that seemed to open a clear path out of his worst difficulties; now they had quarrelled; and besides were both angry with him. The main fear was that Liftore would now make some progress with her. Things looked dangerous. Even his warning against Caley had led to a result the very opposite of his intent and desire. And now it recurred to him that he had once come upon Liftore talking to Caley, and giving her something that shone like a sovereign.

Earlier on the same morning of her visit to the studio, Florimel had awaked and found herself in the presence of the spiritual Vehmgericht. Every member of the tribunal seemed against her. All her thoughts were busy accusing, none of them excusing one another. So hard were they upon her that she fancied she had nearly come to the conclusion that, if only she could do it pleasantly, without pain or fear, the best thing would be to swallow something and fall asleep; for like most people she was practically an atheist, and therefore always thought of death as the refuge from the ills of life. But although she was often very uncomfortable, Florimel knew nothing of such genuine downright misery as drives some people to what can be no more to their purpose than if a man should strip himself naked because he is cold. When she returned from her unhappy visit, and had sent her attendant to get her some tea, she threw herself upon her bed, and found herself yet again in the dark chambers of the spiritual police. But already even their company was preferable to that of Caley, whose officiousness began to enrage her. She was yet tossing in the Nessus-tunic of her own disharmony, when Malcolm came for orders. To get rid of herself and Caley both, she desired him to bring the horses round at once.

It was more than Malcolm had expected. He ran: he might yet have a chance of trying to turn her in the right direction. He knew that Liftore was neither in the house nor at the stable With the help of the earl's groom, he was round in ten minutes. Florimel was all but ready: like some other ladies she could dress quickly when she had good reason. She sprang from Malcolm's hand to the saddle, and led as straight northward as she could go, never looking behind her till she drew rein on the top of Hampstead Heath. When he rode up to her "Malcolm," she said, looking at him half-ashamed, "I don't think my father *would* have minded you wearing his clothes."

"Thank you, my lady," said Malcolm. "At least he would have forgiven anything meant for your pleasure."

"I was too hasty," she said. "But the fact was, Mr Lenorme had irritated me, and I foolishly mixed you up with him."

"When I went into the studio, after you left it, this morning, my lady," Malcolm ventured, "he had his head between his hands and would not even look at me."

Florimel turned her face aside, and Malcolm thought she was sorry; but she was only hiding a smile: she had not yet got beyond the kitten-stage of love, and was pleased to find she gave pain.

"If your ladyship never had another true friend, Mr Lenorme is one," added Malcolm.

"What opportunity can you have had for knowing?" said Florimel.

"I have been sitting to him every morning for a good many days," answered Malcolm. "*He* is something like a man!"

Florimel's face flushed with pleasure. She liked to hear him praised, for he loved her.

"You should have seen, my lady, the pains he took with that portrait! He would stare at the little picture you lent him of my lord for minutes, as if he were looking through it at something behind it; then he would get up and go and gaze at your ladyship on the pedestal, as if you were the goddess herself, able to tell him everything about your father; and then he would hurry back to his easel, and give a touch or two to the face, looking at it all the time as if he loved it. It must have been a cruel pain that drove him to smear it as he did!"

Florimel began to feel a little motion of shame somewhere in the mystery of her being. But to show that to her servant, would be to betray herself—the more that he seemed the painter's friend.

"I will ask Lord Liftore to go and see the portrait, and if he thinks it like, I will buy it," she said. "Mr Lenorme is certainly very clever with his brush."

Malcolm saw that she said this not to insult Lenorme, but to blind her groom, and made no answer.

"I will ride there with you to-morrow morning," she added in conclusion, and moved on.

Malcolm touched his hat, and dropped behind. But the next moment he was by her side again.

"I beg your pardon, my lady, but would you allow me to sav one word more?"

She bowed her head.

"That woman Caley, I am certain, is not to be trusted. She does not love you, my lady."

"How do you know that?" asked Florimel, speaking steadily, but writhing inwardly with the knowledge that the warning was too late.

"I have tried her spirit," answered Malcolm, "and know that it is of the devil. She loves herself too much to be true."

After a little pause Florimel said,

"I know you mean well, Malcolm; but it is nothing to me whether she loves me or not. We don't look for that now-a-days from servants."

"It is because I love you, my lady," said Malcolm, "that I know Caley does not. If she should get hold of anything your ladyship would not wish talked about,—"

"That she cannot," said Florimel, but with an inward shudder. "She may tell the whole world all she can discover."

She would have cantered on as the words left her lips, but something in Malcolm's looks held her. She turned pale; she trembled: her father was looking at her as only once had she seen him—in doubt whether his child lied. The illusion was terrible. She shook in her saddle. The next moment she was galloping along the grassy border of the heath in wild flight from her worst enemy, whom yet she could never by the wildest of flights escape; for when, coming a little to herself as she approached a sand-pit, she pulled up, there was her enemy—neither before nor behind, neither above nor beneath nor within her: it was the self which had just told a lie to the servant of whom she had so lately boasted that he never told one in his life. Then she grew angry. What had she done to be thus tormented? *She* a marchioness, thus pestered by her own menials—pulled in opposing directions by a groom and a maid. She would turn them both away, and have nobody about her, either to trust or suspect.

She might have called them her good and her evil demon; for she knew, that is, she had it somewhere about her, but did not look it out, that it was her own cowardice and concealment, her own falseness to the traditional, never-failing courage of her house, her ignobility, and unfitness to represent the Colonsays—her double dealing in short, that had made the marchioness in her own right the slave of her woman, the rebuked of her groom!

She turned and rode back, looking the other way as she passed Malcolm.

When they reached the top of the heath, riding along to meet them came Liftore—this time to Florimel's consolation and comfort: she did not like riding unprotected with a good angel at her heels. So glad was she that she did not even take the trouble to wonder how he had discovered the road she went. She never suspected that Caley had sent his lordship's groom to follow her until the direction of her ride should be evident, but took his appearance without question, as a loverlike attention, and rode home with him, talking the whole way, and cherishing a feeling of triumph over both Malcolm and Lenorme. Had she not a protector of her own kind? Could she not, when they troubled her, pass from their sphere into one beyond their ken? For the poor moment, the weak lord who rode beside her seemed to her foolish heart a tower of refuge. She was particularly gracious to her tower as they rode, and fancied again and again that perhaps the best way out of her troubles would be to encourage and at last accept him, so getting rid of honeyed delights and rankling stings together, of good and evil angels and low-bred lover at one sweep. Quiet would console for dulness, innocence for weariness. She would fain have a good conscience toward Society—that image whose feet are of gold and its head a bag of chaff and sawdust.

Malcolm followed sick at heart that she should prove herself so shallow. Riding Honour, he had plenty of leisure to brood.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A CHASTISEMENT.

When she went to her room, there was Caley taking from a portmanteau the Highland dress which had occasioned so much. A note fell, and she handed it to her mistress. Florimel opened it, grew pale as she read it, and asked Caley to bring her a glass of water. No sooner had her maid left the room than she sprang to the door and bolted it. Then the tears burst from her eyes, she sobbed despairingly, and but for the help of her handkerchief would have wailed aloud. When Caley returned, she answered to her knock that she was lying down, and wanted to sleep. She was, however, trying to force further communication from the note. In it the painter told her that he was going to set out the next morning for Italy, and that her portrait was at the shop of certain carvers and gilders, being fitted with a frame for which he had made drawings. Three times she read it, searching for some hidden message to her heart; she held it up between her and the light; then before the fire till it crackled like a bit of old parchment; but all was in vain: by no device, intellectual or physical, could she coax the shadow of a meaning out of it, beyond what lay plain on the surface. She must, she *would* see him again.

That night she was merrier than usual at dinner; after it, sang ballad after ballad to please Liftore; then went to her room and told Caley to arrange for yet a visit, the next morning, to Mr Lenorme's studio. She positively must, she said, secure her father's portrait ere the ill-tempered painter—all men of genius were hasty and unreasonable—should have destroyed it utterly, as he was certain to do before leaving—and with that she showed her Lenorme's letter. Caley was all service, only said that this time she thought they had better go openly. She would see Lady Bellair as soon as Lady Lossie was in bed, and explain the thing to her.

The next morning therefore they drove to Chelsea in the carriage. When the door opened, Florimel walked straight up to the study. There she saw no one, and her heart, which had been fluttering strangely, sank, and was painfully still, while her gaze went wandering about the room. It fell upon the pictured temple of Isis: a thick dark veil had fallen and shrouded the whole figure of the goddess, leaving only the outline; and the form of the worshipping youth had vanished utterly: where he had stood, the tesselated pavement, with the serpent of life twining through it, and the sculptured walls of the temple, shone out clear and bare, as if Hyacinth had walked out into the desert to return no more. Again the tears gushed from the heart of Florimel: she had sinned against her own fame—had blotted out a fair memorial record that might have outlasted the knight of stone under the Norman canopy in Lossie church. Again she sobbed, again she choked down a cry that had else become a scream.

Arms were around her. Never doubting whose the embrace, she leaned her head against his bosom, stayed her sobs with the one word "*Cruel!*" and slowly opening her tearful eyes, lifted them to the face that bent over hers. It was Liftore's. She was dumb with disappointment and dismay. It was a hateful moment. He kissed her forehead and eyes, and sought her mouth. She shrieked aloud. In her very agony at the loss of one to be kissed by another!—and there! It was too degrading! too horrid!

At the sound of her cry someone started up at the other end of the room. An easel with a large canvas on it fell, and a man came forward with great strides. Liftore let her go, with a muttered curse on the intruder, and she darted from the room into the arms of Caley, who had had her ear against the other side of the door. The same instant Malcolm received from his lordship a well planted blow between the eyes, which filled them with flashes and darkness. The next, the earl was on the floor. The ancient fury of the Celt had burst up into the nineteenth century, and mastered a noble spirit. All Malcolm could afterwards remember was that he came to himself dealing Liftore merciless blows, his foot on his back, and his weapon the earl's whip. His lordship, struggling to rise, turned up a face white with hate and impotent fury.

"You damned flunkie!" he panted. "I'll have you shot like a mangy dog."

"Meanwhile I will chastise you like an insolent nobleman," said Malcolm, who had already almost recovered his self-possession. "You dare to touch my mistress!"

And with the words he gave him one more stinging cut with the whip.

"Stand off, and let it be man to man," cried Liftore, with a fierce oath, clenching his teeth in agony and rage.

"That it cannot be, my lord; but I have had enough, and so I hope has your lordship," said Malcolm; and as he spoke he threw the whip to the other end of the room, and stood back. Liftore sprang to his feet, and rushed at him. Malcolm caught him by the wrist with a fisherman's grasp.

"My lord, I don't want to kill you. Take a warning, and let ill be, for fear of worse," he said, and threw his hand from him with a swing that nearly dislocated his shoulder.

The warning sufficed. His lordship cast him one scowl of concentrated hate and revenge, and leaving the room hurried also from the house.

At the usual morning hour, Malcolm had ridden to Chelsea, hoping to find his friend in a less despairing and more companionable mood than when he left him. To his surprise and disappointment he learned that Lenorme had sailed by the packet to Ostend the night before. He asked leave to go into the study. There on its easel stood the portrait of his father as he had last seen it—disfigured with a great smear of brown paint across the face. He knew that the face was dry, and he saw that the smear was wet: he would see whether he could not, with turpentine and a soft brush, remove the insult. In this endeavour he was so absorbed, and by the picture itself was so divided from the rest of the room, that he neither saw nor heard anything until Florimel cried out.

Naturally, those events made him yet more dissatisfied with his sister's position. Evil influences and dangers were on all sides of her—the worst possible outcome being that, loving one man, she should marry another, and him such a man as Liftore. Whatever he heard in the servants' hall, both tone and substance, only confirmed the unfavourable impression he had had from the first of the bold-faced countess. The oldest of her servants had, he found, the least respect for their mistress, although all had a certain liking for her, which gave their disrespect the heavier import. He *must* get Florimel away somehow. While all was right between her and the painter he had been less anxious about her immediate surroundings, trusting that Lenorme would ere long deliver her. But now she had driven him from the very country, and he had left no clue to follow him up by. His housekeeper could tell nothing of his purposes. The gardener and she were left in charge as a matter of course. He might be back in a week, or a year; she could not even conjecture.

Seeming possibilities, in varied mingling with rank absurdities passing through Malcolm's mind, as, after Liftore's punishment, he lifted the portrait, set it again upon its easel, and went on trying to clean the face of it—with no small promise of success. But as he made progress he grew anxious—lest with the defilement, he should remove some of the colour as well: the painter alone, he concluded at length could be trusted to restore the work he had ruined.

He left the house, walked across the road to the river-bank, and gave a short sharp whistle. In an instant Davy was in the dinghy, pulling for the shore. Malcolm went on board the yacht, saw that all was right, gave some orders, went ashore again, and mounted Kelpie.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### LIES.

In pain, wrath, and mortification, Liftore rode home. What would the men at his club say if they knew that he had been thrashed by a scoundrel of a groom for kissing his mistress? The fact would soon be out: he must do his best to have it taken for what it ought to be—namely, fiction. It was the harder upon him that he knew himself no coward. He must punish the rascal somehow—he owed it to society to punish him; but at present he did not see how, and the first thing was to have the first word with Florimel; he must see her before she saw the ruffian. He rode as hard as he dared to Curzon Street, sent his groom to the stables, telling him he should want the horses again before lunch, had a hot bath, of which he stood in dire need, and some brandy with his breakfast, and then, all unfit for exercise as he was, walked to Portland Place.

Mistress and maid rode home together in silence. The moment Florimel heard Malcolm's voice she had left the house. Caley following had heard enough to know that there was a scuffle at least going on in the study, and her eye witnessed against her heart that Liftore could have no chance with the detested groom if the respect of the latter gave way: would MacPhail thrash his lordship? If he did, it would be well she should know it. In the hoped event of his lordship's marrying her mistress, it was desirable, not only that she should be in favour with both of them, but that she should have some hold upon each of a more certainly enduring nature: if she held secrets with husband and wife separately, she would be in clover for the period of her natural existence.

As to Florimel, she was enraged at the liberties Liftore had taken with her. But alas! was she not in some degree in his power? He had found her there, and in tears! How did he come to be there? If Malcolm's judgment of her was correct, Caley might have told him. Was she already false? She pondered within herself, and cast no look upon her maid until she had concluded how best to carry herself towards the earl. Then glancing at the hooded cobra beside her—

"What an awkward thing that Lord Liftore, of all moments, should appear just then!" she said. "How could it be?"

"I'm sure I haven't an idea, my lady," returned Caley. "My lord has been always kind to Mr Lenorme, and I suppose he has been in the way of going to see him at work. Who would have thought my lord had been such an early riser! There are not many gentlemen like him now-a-days, my lady! Did your ladyship hear the noise in the studio after you left it?"

"I heard high words," answered her mistress, "—nothing more. How on earth did MacPhail come to be there as well?—From you, Caley, I will not conceal that his lordship behaved indiscreetly; in fact he was rude; and I can quite imagine that MacPhail thought it his duty to defend me. It is all very awkward for me. Who could have imagined *him* there, and sitting behind amongst the pictures! It almost makes me doubt whether Mr Lenorme be really gone."

"It seems to me, my lady," returned Caley, "that the man is always just where he ought not to be, always meddling with something he has no business with. I beg your pardon, my lady," she went on, "but wouldn't it be better to get some staid elderly man for a groom, one who has been properly bred up to his duties and taught his manners in a gentleman's stable? It is so odd to have a groom from a rough seafaring set—one who behaves like the rude fisherman he is, never having had to obey orders of lord or lady! The worst of it is, your ladyship will soon be the town's talk if you have such a groom on such a horse after you everywhere."

Florimel's face flushed. Caley saw she was angry, and held her peace.

Breakfast was hardly over, when Liftore walked in, looking pale, and, in spite of his faultless *get-up*, somewhat disreputable for shame, secret pain, and anger do not favour a good carriage or honest mien. Florimel threw herself back in her chair—an action characteristic of the bold-faced countess, and held out her left hand to him in an expansive, benevolent sort of way.

"How dare you come into my presence, looking so well pleased with yourself, my lord, after giving me such a fright this morning?" she said. "You might at least have made sure that there was—that we were———" She could not bring herself to complete the sentence.

"My dearest girl!" said his lordship, not only delighted to get off so pleasantly, but profoundly flattered by the implied understanding, "I found you in tears, and how could I think of anything else? It may have been stupid, but I trust you will think it pardonable."

Caley had not fully betrayed her mistress to his lordship, and he had, entirely to his own satisfaction, explained the liking of Florimel for the society of the painter as the mere fancy of a girl for the admiration of one whose employment, although nothing above the servile, yet gave him a claim something beyond that of a milliner or hair-dresser, to be considered a judge in matters of appearance. As to anything more in the affair—and with *him* in the field—of such a notion he was simply incapable: he could not have wronged the lady he meant to honour with his hand, by regarding it as within the bounds of the possible.

"It was no wonder I was crying," said Florimel. "A seraph would have cried to see the state my father's portrait was in."

"Your father's portrait!"

"Yes. Did you not know? Mr Lenorme has been painting one from a miniature I lent him—under my supervision, of course; and just because I let fall a word that showed I was not altogether satisfied with the likeness, what should the wretched man do but catch up a brush full of filthy black paint, and smudge the face all over!"

"Oh, Lenorme will soon set it to rights again. He's not a bad fellow though he does belong to the *genus irritabile.* I will go about it this very day."

"You'll not find him, I'm sorry to say. There's a note I had from him yesterday. And the picture's quite unfit to be seen—utterly ruined. But I *can't* think how you could miss it!"

"To tell you the truth, Florimel, I had a bit of a scrimmage after you left me in the studio." Here his lordship did his best to imitate a laugh. "Who should come rushing upon me out of the back regions of paint and canvas but that mad groom of yours! I don't suppose you knew he was there?"

"Not I. I saw a man's feet—that was all."

"Well, there he was, for what reason the devil knows, perdu amongst the painter's litter; and when he heard your little startled cry—most musical, most melancholy—what should he fancy but that you were frightened, and he must rush to the rescue! And so he did with a vengeance: I don't know when I shall quite forget the blow he gave me." And again Liftore laughed, or thought he did.

"He struck you!" exclaimed Florimel, rather astonished, but hardly able for inward satisfaction to put enough of indignation into her tone.

"He did, the fellow!—But don't say a word about it, for I thrashed him so unmercifully that, to tell the truth, I had to stop because I grew sorry for him. I am sorry now. So I hope you will take no notice of it. In fact, I begin to like the rascal: you know I was never favourably impressed with him. By Jove! it is not every mistress that can have such a devoted attendant. I only hope his over-zeal in your service may never get you into some compromising position. He is hardly, with all his virtues, the proper servant for a young lady to have about her; he has had no training—no *proper* training at all, you see. But you must let the villain nurse himself for a day or two anyhow. It would be torture to make him ride, after what I gave him."

His lordship spoke feelingly, with heroic endurance indeed; and if Malcolm should dare give *his* account of the fracas, he trusted to the word of a gentleman to outweigh that of a groom.

Not all to whom it may seem incredible that a nobleman should thus lie, are themselves incapable of doing likewise. Any man may put himself in training for a liar by doing things he would be ashamed to have known. The art is easily learned, and to practise it well is a great advantage to people with *designs*. Men of ability, indeed, if they take care not to try hard to speak the truth, will soon become able to lie as truthfully as any sneak that sells grease for butter to the poverty of the New Cut.

It is worth remarking to him who can from the lie factual carry his thought deeper to the lie essential, that all the power of a lie comes from the truth; it has none in itself. So strong is the truth that a mere resemblance to it is the source of strength to its opposite—until it be found that *like* is not *the same.*

Florimel had already made considerable progress in the art, but proficiency in lying does not always develop the power of detecting it. She knew that her father had on one occasion struck Malcolm, and that he had taken it with the utmost gentleness, confessing himself in the wrong. Also she had the impression that for a menial to lift his hand against a gentleman, even in self-defence, was a thing unheard of. The blow Malcolm had struck Liftore was for her, not himself. Therefore, while her confidence in Malcolm's courage and prowess remained unshaken, she was yet able to believe that Liftore had done as he said, and supposed that Malcolm had submitted. In her heart she pitied without despising him.

Caley herself took him the message that he would not be wanted. As she delivered it, she smiled an evil smile and dropped a mocking courtesy, with her gaze well fixed on his two black eyes and the great bruise between them.

When Liftore mounted to accompany Lady Lossie, it took all the pluck that belonged to his high breed to enable him to smile and smile, with twenty counsellors in different parts of his body feelingly persuading him that he was at least a liar. As they rode, Florimel asked him how he came to be at the studio that morning. He told her that he had wanted very much to see her portrait before the final touches were given it. He could have made certain suggestions, he believed, that no one else could. He had indeed, he confessed—and felt absolutely virtuous in doing so, because here he spoke a fact—heard from his aunt that Florimel was to be there that morning for the last time: it was therefore his only chance; but he had expected to be there hours before she was out of bed. For the rest, he hoped he had been punished enough, seeing her rascally groom—and once more his lordship laughed peculiarly—had but just failed of breaking his arm; it was all he could do to hold the reins.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### AN OLD ENEMY.

One Sunday evening—it must have been just while Malcolm and Blue Peter stood in the Strand listening to a voluntary that filled and overflowed an otherwise empty church—a short, stout, elderly woman was walking lightly along the pavement of a street of small houses, not far from a thoroughfare which, crowded like a market the night before, had now two lively borders only—of holiday-makers mingled with church-goers. The bells for evening prayers were ringing. The sun had vanished behind the smoke and steam of London; indeed he might have set—it was hard to say without consulting the almanac: but it was not dark yet. The lamps in the street were lighted, however, and also in the church she passed. She carried a small bible in her hand, folded in a pocket-handkerchief, and looked a decent woman from the country. Her quest was a place where the minister said his prayers and did not read them out of a book: she had been brought up a Presbyterian, and had prejudices in favour of what she took for the simpler form of worship. Nor had she gone much farther before she came upon a chapel which seemed to promise all she wanted. She entered, and a sad-looking woman showed her to a seat. She sat down square, fixing her eyes at once on the pulpit, rather dimly visible over many pews, as if it were one of the mountains that surrounded her Jerusalem. The place was but scantily lighted, for the community at present could ill afford to burn daylight. When the worship commenced, and the congregation rose to sing, she got up with a jerk that showed the duty as unwelcome as unexpected, but seemed by the way she settled herself in her seat for the prayer, already thereby reconciled to the differences between Scotch church-customs and English chapel-customs. She went to sleep softly, and woke warily as the prayer came to a close.

While the congregation again sang, the minister who had officiated hitherto left the pulpit, and another ascended to preach. When he began to read the text, the woman gave a little start, and leaning forward, peered very hard to gain a satisfactory sight of his face between the candles on each side of it, but without success; she soon gave up her attempted scrutiny, and thenceforward seemed to listen with marked attention. The sermon was a simple, earnest, at times impassioned appeal to the hearts and consciences of the congregation. There was little attempt in it at the communication of knowledge of any kind, but the most indifferent hearer must have been aware that the speaker was earnestly straining after something. To those who understood, it was as if he would force his way through every stockade of prejudice, ditch of habit, rampart of indifference, moat of sin, wall of stupidity, and curtain of ignorance, until he stood face to face with the conscience of his hearer.

"Rank Arminianism!" murmured the woman. "Whaur's the gospel o' that?" But still she listened with seeming intentness, while something of wonder mingled with the something else that set in motion every live wrinkle in her forehead, and made her eyebrows undulate like writhing snakes.

At length the preacher rose to eloquence, an eloquence inspired by the hunger of his soul after truth eternal, and the love he bore to his brethren who fed on husks—an eloquence innocent of the tricks of elocution or the arts of rhetoric: to have discovered himself using one of them would have sent him home to his knees in shame and fear—an eloquence not devoid of discords, the strings of his instrument being now slack with emotion, now tense with vision, yet even in those discords shrouding the essence of all harmony. When he ceased, the silence that followed seemed instinct with thought, with that speech of the spirit which no longer needs the articulating voice.

"It *canna* be the stickit minister!" said the woman to herself.

The congregation slowly dispersed, but she sat motionless until all were gone, and the sad-faced woman was putting out the lights. Then she rose, drew near through the gloom, and asked her the name of the gentleman who had given them such a grand sermon. The woman told her, adding that, although he had two or three times spoken to them at the prayer meeting—such words of comfort, the poor soul added, as she had never in her life heard before—this was the first time he had occupied the pulpit. The woman thanked her, and went out into the street.

"God bless me!" she said to herself, as she walked away; "it *is* the stickit minister! Weel, won'ers 'ill never cease. The age o' mirracles 'ill be come back, I'm thinkin'!" And she laughed an oily contemptuous laugh in the depths of her profuse person.

What caused her astonishment need cause none to the thoughtful mind. The man was no longer burdened with any anxiety as to his reception by his hearers; he was hampered by no necromantic agony to raise the dead letter of the sermon buried in the tail-pocket of his coat; he had thirty years more of life, and a whole granary filled with such truths as grow for him who is ever breaking up the clods of his being to the spiritual sun and wind and dew; and above all he had an absolute yet expanding confidence in his Father in heaven, and a tender love for everything human. The tongue of the dumb had been in training for song. And first of all he had learned to be silent while he had nought to reveal. He had been trained to babble about religion, but through God's grace had failed in his babble, and that was in itself a success. He would have made one of the swarm that year after year cast themselves like flies on the burning sacrifice that they may live on its flesh, with evil odours extinguishing the fire that should have gone up in flame; but a burning coal from off the altar had been laid on his lips, and had silenced them in torture. For thirty years he had held his peace, until the word of God had become as a fire in his bones: it was now breaking forth in flashes.

On the Monday, Mrs Catanach sought the shop of the deacon that was an ironmonger, secured for herself a sitting in the chapel for the next half-year, and prepaid the sitting.

"Wha kens," she said to herself, "what birds may come to gether worms an' golachs (*beetles*) aboot the boody-craw (*scarecrow*), Sanny Grame!"

She was one to whom intrigue, founded on the knowledge of private history, was as the very breath of her being; she could not exist in composure without it. Wherever she went, therefore—and her changes of residence had not been few—it was one of her first cares to enter into connection with some religious community, first that she might have scope for her calling—that of a midwife, which in London would probably be straightened towards that of mere monthly nurse—and next that thereby she might have good chances for the finding of certain weeds of occult power that spring mostly in walled gardens, and are rare on the roadside—poisonous things mostly, called generically *secrets.*

At this time she had been for some painful months in possession of a most important one—painful, I say, because all those months she had discovered no possibility of making use of it. The trial had been hard. Her one passion was to drive the dark horses of society, and here she had been sitting week after week on the coach-box over the finest team she had ever handled, ramping and "foming tarre," unable to give them their heads because the demon-grooms had disappeared and left the looped traces dangling from their collars. She had followed Florimel from Portlossie—to Edinburgh, and then to London, but not yet had seen how to approach her with probable advantage. In the meantime she had renewed old relations with a certain herb-doctor in Kentish Town, at whose house she was now accommodated. There she had already begun to entice the confidences of maid-servants, by use of what evil knowledge she had, and pretence to more, giving herself out as a wise woman. Her faith never failed her that, if she but kept handling the fowls of circumstance, one or other of them must at length drop an egg of opportunity in her lap. When she stumbled upon the schoolmaster, preaching in a chapel near her own haunts, she felt something more like a gust of gratitude to the dark power that sat behind and pulled the strings of events—for thus she saw through her own projected phantom the heart of the universe—than she had ever yet experienced. If there were such things as special providences, here, she said, was one; if not, then it was better luck than she had looked for. The main point in it was that the dominie seemed likely after all to turn out a popular preacher;

then beyond a doubt other Scotch people would gather to him; this or that person might turn up, and anyone might turn out useful; one thread might be knotted to another, until all together had made a clue to guide her straight through the labyrinth to the centre, to lay her hand on the collar of the demon of the house of Lossie. It was the biggest game of her life, and had been its game long before the opening of my narrative.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE EVIL GENIUS.

WHEN Malcolm first visited Mr Graham, the schoolmaster had already preached two or three times in the pulpit of Hope Chapel. His ministrations at the prayer-meetings had led to this. For every night on which he was expected to speak, there were more people present than on the last; and when the deacons saw this, they asked him to preach on the Sundays. After two Sundays they came to him in a body, and besought him to become a candidate for the vacant pulpit, assuring him of success if he did so. He gave a decided refusal, however, nor mentioned his reasons. His friend Marshal urged him, pledging himself for his income to an amount which would have been riches to the dominie, but in vain. Thereupon the silk-mercer concluded that he must have money, and, kind man as he was, grew kinder in consequence, and congratulated him on his independence.

"I depend more on the fewness of my wants than on any earthly store for supplying them," said the dominie.

Marshal's thermometer fell a little, but not his anxiety to secure services which, he insisted, would be for the glory of God and the everlasting good of perishing souls. The schoolmaster only smiled queerly and held his peace.

He consented, however, to preach the next Sunday, and on the Monday, consented to preach the next again. For several weeks the same thing occurred. But he would never promise on a Sunday, or allow the briefest advertisement to be given concerning him. All said he was feeling his way.

Neither had he, up to this time, said a word to Malcolm about the manner in which his Sundays were employed, while yet he talked much about a school he had opened in a room occupied in the evenings by a debating club, where he was teaching such children of small shopkeepers and artisans as found their way to him—in part through his connection with the chapel-folk. When Malcolm had called on a Sunday, his landlady had been able to tell him nothing more than that Mr Graham had gone out at such and such an hour—she presumed to church; and when he had once or twice expressed a wish to accompany him wherever he went to worship, Mr Graham had managed somehow to let him go without having made any arrangement for his doing so.

On the evening after his encounter with Liftore, Malcolm visited the schoolmaster, and told him everything about the affair. He concluded by saying that Lizzie's wrongs had loaded the whip far more than his sister's insult; but that he was very doubtful whether he had had any right to constitute himself the avenger of either after such a fashion. Mr Graham replied that a man ought never to be carried away by wrath, as he had so often sought to impress upon him, and not without success: but that, in the present case, as the rascal deserved it so well, he did not think he need trouble himself much. At the same time he ought to remind himself that the rightness or wrongness of any particular act was of far less consequence than the rightness or wrongness of the will whence sprang the act; and that, while no man could be too anxious as to whether a contemplated action ought or ought not to be done, at the same time no man *could* do anything absolutely right until he was one with him whose was the only absolute self-generated purity—that is, until God dwelt in him and he in God.

Before he left, the schoolmaster had acquainted him with all that portion of his London history which he had hitherto kept from him, and told him where he was preaching.

When Caley returned to her mistress after giving Malcolm the message that she did not require his services, and reported the condition of his face, Florimel informed her of the chastisement he had received from Liftore, and desired her to find out for her how he was, for she was anxious about him. Somehow Florimel felt sorrier for him than she could well understand, seeing he was but a groom—a great lumbering fellow, all his life used to hard knocks, which probably never hurt him. That her mistress should care so much about him added yet an acrid touch to Caley's spite; but she put on her bonnet and went to the mews, to confer with the wife of his lordship's groom, who, although an honest woman, had not yet come within her dislike. She went to make her inquiries, however, full of grave doubt as to his lordship's statement to her mistress; and the result of them was a conviction that, beyond his facial bruises, of which Mrs Merton had heard no explanation, Malcolm had had no hurt. This confirmed her suspicion that his lordship had received what he professed to have given: from a window she had seen him mount his horse; and her woman's-fancy for him, while it added to her hate of Malcolm, did not prevent her from thinking of the advantage the discovery might bring in the prosecution of her own schemes. But now she began to fear Malcolm a little as well as hate him. And indeed he was rather a dangerous person to have about, where all but himself had secrets more or less bad, and one at least had dangerous ones—as Caley's conscience, or what poor monkey-rudiment in her did duty for one, in private asserted. Notwithstanding her hold upon her mistress, she would not have felt it quite safe to let her know all her secrets. She would not have liked to say, for instance, how often she woke suddenly with a little feeble wail sounding in the ears that fingers cannot stop, or to confess that it cried out against a double injustice, that of life and that of death: she had crossed the border of the region of horror, and went about with a worm coiled in her heart, like a centipede in the stone of a peach.

"Merton's wife knows nothing, my lady," she said on her return. "I saw the fellow in the yard going about much as usual. He will stand a good deal of punishing, I fancy, my lady—like that brute of a horse he makes such a fuss with. I can't help wishing, for your ladyship's sake, we had never set eyes on him. He 'll do us all a mischief yet before we get rid of him. I've had a hinstinc' of it, my lady, from the first moment I set eyes on him;" Caley's speech was never classic; when she was excited it was low.—"And when I 'ave a hinstinc' of anythink, he's not a dog as barks for nothink. Mark my words—and I'm sure I beg your pardon, my lady—but that man will bring shame on the house. He's that arrergant an' interferin' as is certain sure to bring your ladyship into public speech an' a scandal: things will come to be spoke, my lady, that hadn't ought to be mentioned. Why, my lady, he must ha' struck his lordship, afore he'd ha' give him two such black eyes as them! And him that good-natured an' condescendin'!—I'm sure I don't know what's to come on it, but your ladyship might cast a thought on the rest of us females as can't take the liberties of born ladies without sufferin' for it. Think what the world w'll say of *us*. It's hard, my lady, on the likes of us."

But Florimel was not one to be talked into doing what she did not choose. Neither would she to her maid render her reasons for not choosing. She had repaired her fortifications, strengthened herself with Liftore, and was confident.

"The fact is, Caley," she said, "I have fallen in love with Kelpie, and never mean to part with her—at least till I can ride her—or she kills me. So I can't do without MacPhail. And I hope she won't kill him before he has persuaded her to let me mount her. The man must go with the mare. Besides, he is such a strange fellow, if I turned him away I should quite expect him to poison her before he left."

The maid's face grew darker. That her mistress had the slightest intention of ever mounting that mare she did not find herself fool enough to believe, but of other reasons she could spy plenty behind. And such there truly were, though none of the sort which Caley's imagination, swift to evil, now supplied. The kind of confidence she reposed in her groom, Caley had no faculty for understanding, and was the last person to whom her mistress could impart the fact of her father's leaving her in charge to his young henchman. To the memory of her father she clung, and so far faithfully that, even now when Malcolm had begun to occasion her a feeling of awe and rebuke, she did not the less confidently regard him as her good genius that he was in danger of becoming an unpleasant one.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### CONJUNCTIONS.

As the days passed on, and Florimel heard nothing of Lenorme, the uneasiness that came with the thought of him gradually diminished, and all the associations of opposite complexion returned. Untrammelled by fear, the path into a scaring future seeming to be cut off, her imagination began to work in the quarry of her late experience, shaping its dazzling material into gorgeous castles, with foundations deep-dug in the air, wherein lorded the person and gifts and devotion of the painter. When lost in such blissful reveries, not seldom moments arrived in which she imagined herself—even felt as if she were capable, if not of marrying Lenorme in the flushed face of outraged society, yet of fleeing with him from the judgment of the all but all-potent divinity to the friendly bosom of some blessed isle of the southern seas, whose empty luxuriance they might change into luxury, and there living a long harmonious idyll of wedded love, in which old age and death should be provided against by never taking them into account. This mere fancy, which, poor in courage as it was in invention, she was far from capable of carrying into effect, yet seemed to herself the outcome and sign of a whole world of devotion in her bosom. If one of the meanest of human conditions is conscious heroism, paltrier yet is heroism before the fact, incapable of self-realization! But even the poorest dreaming has its influences, and the result of hers was that the attentions of Liftore became again distasteful to her. And no wonder, for indeed his lordship's presence in the actual world made a poor show beside that of the painter in the ideal world of the woman who, if she could not with truth be said to love him, yet certainly had a powerful fancy for him: the mean phrase is good enough, even although the phantom of Lenorme roused in her all the twilight poetry of her nature, and the presence of Liftore set her whole consciousness in the perpendicular shadowless gas-light of prudence and self-protection.

The pleasure of her castle-building was but seldom interrupted by any thought of the shamefulness of her behaviour to him. That did not matter much! She could so easily make up for all he had suffered! Her selfishness closed her eyes to her own falsehood. Had she meant it truly she would have been right both for him and for herself. To have repented and become as noble a creature as Lenorme was capable of imagining her—not to say as God had designed her, would indeed have been to make up for all he had suffered. But the poor blandishment she contemplated as amends, could render him blessed only while its intoxication blinded him to the fact that it meant nothing of what it ought to mean, that behind it was no entire, heart-filled woman. Meantime, as the past, with its delightful imprudences, its trembling joys, glided away, swiftly widening the space between her and her false fears and shames, and seeming to draw with it the very facts themselves, promising to obliterate at length all traces of them, she gathered courage; and as the feeling of exposure that had made the covert of Liftore's attentions acceptable, began to yield, her variableness began to re-appear, and his lordship to find her uncertain as ever. Assuredly, as his aunt said, she was yet but a girl incapable of knowing her own mind, and he must not press his suit. Nor had he the spur of jealousy or fear to urge him: society regarded her as his; and the shadowy repute of the bold-faced countess intercepted some favourable rays which would otherwise have fallen upon the young, and beautiful marchioness from fairer luminaries even than Liftore.

But there was one good process, by herself little regarded, going on in Florimel: notwithstanding the moral discomfort oftener than once occasioned her by Malcolm, her confidence in him was increasing; and now that the kind of danger threatening her seemed altered, she leaned her mind upon him not a little—and more than she could well have accounted for to herself on the only grounds she could have adduced—namely that he was an attendant authorized by her father, and, like herself, loyal to his memory and will; and that, faithful as a dog, he would fly at the throat of anyone who dared touch her—of which she had had late proof, supplemented by his silent endurance of consequent suffering. Demon sometimes looked angry—when she teased him—had even gone so far as to bare his teeth; but Malcolm had never shown temper. In a matter of imagined duty, he might presume—but that was a small thing beside the sense of safety his very presence brought with it. She shuddered indeed at the remembrance of one look he had given her, but that had been for no behaviour to himself; and now that the painter was gone, she was clear of all temptation to the sort of thing that had caused it; and never, never more would she permit herself to be drawn into circumstances the least equivocal!—If only Lenorme would come back, and allow her to be his friend—his *best* friend—his only young lady friend, leaving her at perfect liberty to do just as she liked, then all would be well—absolutely comfortable! In the meantime, life was endurable without him—and would be, provided Liftore did not make himself disagreeable. If he did, there were other gentlemen who might be induced to keep him in check: she would punish him—she knew how. She liked him better, however, than any of those.

It was out of pure kindness to Malcolm, upon Liftore's representation of how he had punished him, that for the rest of the week she dispensed with his attendance upon herself. But he, unaware of the lies Liftore had told her, and knowing nothing, therefore, of her reason for doing so, supposed she resented the liberty he had taken in warning her against Caley, feared the breach would go on widening, and went about, if not quite downcast, yet less hopeful still. Everything seemed going counter to his desires. A whole world of work lay before him:—a harbour to build; a numerous fisher-clan to house as they ought to be housed; justice to do on all sides; righteous servants to appoint in place of oppressors; and, all over, to show the heavens more just than his family had in the past allowed them to appear; he had mortgages and other debts to pay off—clearing his feet from fetters and his hands from manacles, that he might be the true lord of his people; he had Miss Horn to thank, and the schoolmaster to restore to the souls and hearts of Portlossie; and, next of all to his sister, he had old Duncan, his first friend and father, to find and minister to. Not a day passed, not a night did he lay down his head, without thinking of him. But the old man, whatever his hardships, and even the fishermen, with no harbour to run home to from the wild elements, were in no dangers to compare with such as threatened his sister. To set her free was his first business, and that business as yet refused to be done. Hence he was hemmed in, shut up, incarcerated in stubborn circumstance, from a long-reaching range of duties, calling aloud upon his conscience and heart to hasten with the first, that he might reach the second. What rendered it the more disheartening was, that, having discovered, as he hoped, how to compass his first end, the whole possibility had by his sister's behaviour, and the consequent disappearance of Lenorme, been swept from him, leaving him more resourceless than ever.

When Sunday evening came, he found his way to Hope Chapel, and walking in, was shown to a seat by a grimy-faced pew-opener. It was with strange feelings he sat there, thinking of the past, and looking for the appearance of his friend on the pulpit-stair. But his feelings would have been stranger still had he seen who sat immediately in the pew behind him, watching him like a cat watching a mouse, or rather like a half-grown kitten watching a rat, for she was a little frightened at him, even while resolved to have him. But how could she doubt her final success, when her plans were already affording her so much more than she had expected? Who would have looked for the great red stag himself to come browsing so soon about the scarecrow! He was too large game, however, to be stalked without due foresight.

When the congregation was dismissed, after a sermon the power of whose utterance astonished Malcolm, accustomed as he was to the schoolmaster's best moods, he waited until the preacher was at liberty from the unwelcome attentions and vulgar congratulations of the richer and more forward of his hearers, and then joined him to walk home with him.—He was followed to the schoolmaster's lodging, and thence, an hour after, to his own, by a little boy far too little to excite suspicion, the grandson of Mrs Catanach's friend, the herb-doctor.

Until now the woman had not known that Malcolm was in London. When she learned that he was lodged so near Portland Place, she concluded that he was watching his sister, and chuckled over the idea of his being watched in turn by herself.

Every day for weeks after her declaration concerning the birth of Malcolm, had the mind of Mrs Catanach been exercised to the utmost to invent some mode of undoing her own testimony. She would have had no scruples, no sense of moral disgust, in eating every one of her words; but a magistrate and a lawyer had both been present at the uttering of them, and she feared the risk. Malcolm's behaviour to her after his father's death had embittered the unfriendly feelings she had cherished towards him for many years. While she believed him base-born, and was even ignorant as to his father, she had thought to secure power over him for the annoyance of the blind old man to whom she had committed him, and whom she hated with the hatred of a wife with whom for the best of reasons he had refused to live; but she had found in the boy a rectitude over which although she had assailed it from his childhood, she could gain no influence. Either a blind repugnance in Malcolm's soul, or a childish instinct of and revulsion from embodied evil, had held them apart. Even then it had added to her vile indignation that she regarded him as owing her gratitude for not having murdered him at the instigation of his uncle; and when at length, to her endless chagrin, she had herself unwittingly supplied the only lacking link in the testimony that should raise him to rank and wealth, she imagined that by making affidavit to the facts she had already divulged, she enlarged the obligation infinitely, and might henceforth hold him in her hand a tool for further operations. When, therefore, he banished her from Lossie House, and sought to bind her to silence as to his rank by the conditional promise of a small annuity, she hated him with her whole huge power of hating. And now she must make speed, for his incognito in a great city afforded a thousandfold facility for doing him a mischief. And first she must draw closer a certain loose tie she had already looped betwixt herself and the household of Lady Bellair. This tie was the conjunction of her lying influence with the credulous confidence of a certain very ignorant and rather wickedly romantic scullery-maid, with whom, having in espial seen her come from the house she had scraped acquaintance, and to whom, for the securing of power over her through her imagination, she had made the strangest and most appalling disclosures. Amongst other secret favours, she had promised to compound for her a horrible mixture—some of whose disgusting ingredients, as potent as hard to procure, she named in her awe-stricken hearing—which, administered under certain conditions and with certain precautions, one of which was absolute secrecy in regard to the person who provided it, must infallibly secure for her the affections of any man on whom she might cast a loving eye, and whom she could either with or without his consent, contrive to cause partake of the same. This girl she now sought, and from her learned all she knew about Malcolm. Pursuing her enquiries into the nature and composition of the household, however, Mrs Catanach soon discovered a far more capable and indeed less scrupulous associate and instrument in Caley. I will not introduce my reader to any of their evil councils, although, for the sake of my own credit, it might be well to be less considerate, seeing that many, notwithstanding the super-abundant evidence of history, find it all but impossible to believe in the existence of such moral abandonment as theirs. I will merely state concerning them, and all the relations of the two women, that Mrs Catanach assumed and retained the upper hand, in virtue of her superior knowledge, invention, and experience, gathering from Caley, as she had hoped much valuable information, full of reactions, and tending to organic development of scheme in the brain of the arch-plotter. But their designs were so mutually favourable as to promise from the first a final coalescence in some common plan for their attainment.

Those who knew that Miss Campbell, as Portlossie regarded her, had been in reality Lady Lossie, and was the mother of Malcolm, knew as well that Florimel had no legal title even to the family cognomen; but if his mother, and therefore the time of his mother's death, remained unknown, the legitimacy of his sister would remain unsuspected even upon his appearance as the heir. Now there were but three besides Mrs Catanach and Malcolm who did know who was his mother, namely, Miss Horn, Mr Graham, and a certain Mr Morrison, a laird and magistrate near Portlossie, an elderly man, and of late in feeble health. The lawyers the marquis had employed on his death-bed did not know: he had, for Florimel's sake taken care that they should not. Upon what she knew and what she guessed of these facts regarded in all their relations according to her own theories of human nature the midwife would found a scheme of action.

Doubtless she saw, and prepared for it, that after a certain point should be reached the very similarity of their designs must cause a rupture between her and Caley; neither could expect the other to endure such a rival near her hidden throne of influence; for the aim of both was power in a great family, with consequent money, and consideration, and midnight councils, and the wielding of all the weapons of hint and threat and insinuation. There was one difference, indeed, that in Caley's eye money was the chief thing, while power itself was the Swedenborgian hell of the midwife's bliss.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### AN INNOCENT PLOT.

**Florimel** and Lady Clementina Thornicroft, the same who in the park rebuked Malcolm for his treatment of Kelpie, had met several times during the spring, and had been mutually attracted —Florimel as to a nature larger, more developed, more self-supporting than her own, and Lady Clementina as to one who, it was plain, stood in sore need of what countenance and encouragement to good and free action the friendship of one more experienced might afford her. Lady Clementina was but a few years older than Florimel, it is true, but had shown a courage which had already wrought her an unquestionable influence, and that chiefly with the best. The root of this courage was compassion. Her rare humanity of heart would, at the slightest appearance of injustice, drive her like an angel with a flaming sword against customs regarded, consciously or unconsciously, as the very buttresses of social distinction. Anything but a wise woman, she had yet so much in her of what is essential to all wisdom—love to her kind, that, if as yet she had done little but blunder, she had at least blundered beautifully. On every society that had for its declared end the setting right of wrong or the alleviation of misery, she lavished, and mostly wasted, her money. Every misery took to her the shape of a wrong. Hence to every mendicant that could trump up a plausible story, she offered herself a willing prey. Even when the barest-faced imposition was brought home to one of the race parasitical, her first care was to find all possible excuse for his conduct: it was matter of pleasure to her friends when she stopped there, and made no attempt at absolute justification.

Left like Florimel an orphan, but at a yet earlier age, she had been brought up with a care that had gone over into severity, against which her nature had revolted with an energy that gathered strength from her own repression of its signs; and when she came of age, and took things into her own hands, she carried herself in its eyes so oddly, yet with such sweetness and dignity and consistency in her oddest extravagances, that society honoured her even when it laughed at her, loved her, listened to her, applauded, approved—did everything except imitate her—which indeed was just as well, for else confusion would have been worse confounded. She was always rushing to defence—with money, with indignation, with refuge. It would look like a caricature did I record the number of charities to which she belonged, and the various societies which, in the exuberance of her passionate benevolence, she had projected and of necessity abandoned. Yet still the fire burned, for her changes were from no changeableness: through them all the fundamental operation of her character remained the same. The case was that, for all her headlong passion for deliverance, she could not help discovering now and then, through an occasional self-assertion of that real good sense which her rampant and unsubjected benevolence could but overlay, not finally smother, that she was either doing nothing at all, or more evil than good.

The lack of discipline in her goodness came out in this, at times amusingly, that she would always at first side with the lower or weaker or worse. If a dog had torn a child, and was going to be killed in consequence, she would not only intercede for the dog, but absolutely side with him, mentioning this and that provocation which the naughty child must have given him ere he could have been goaded to the deed. Once when the schoolmaster in her village was going to cane a boy for cruelty to a cripple, she pleaded for his pardon on the ground that it was worse to be cruel than to be a cripple, and therefore more to be pitied. Everything painful was to her cruel, and softness and indulgence, moral honey and sugar and nuts to all alike, was the panacea for human ills. She could not understand that infliction might be loving kindness. On one occasion when a boy was caught in the act of picking her pocket, she told the policeman he was doing nothing of the sort—he was only searching for a lozenge for his terrible cough; and in proof of her asserted conviction, she carried him home with her, but lost him before morning, as well as the spoon with which he had eaten his gruel.

As to her person I have already made a poor attempt at describing it. She might have been grand but for loveliness. When she drew herself up in indignation, however, she would look grand for the one moment ere the blood rose to her cheek, and the water to her eyes. She would have taken the whole world to her infinite heart, and in unwisdom coddled it into corruption. Praised be the grandeur of the God who can endure to make and see his children suffer. Thanks be to him for his north winds and his poverty, and his bitterness that falls upon the spirit that errs: let those who know him thus praise the Lord for his goodness. But Lady Clementina had not yet descried the face of the Son of Man through the mists of Mount Sinai, and she was not one to justify the ways of God to men. Not the less was it the heart of God in her that drew her to the young marchioness, over whom was cast the shadow of a tree that gave but baneful shelter. She liked her frankness, her activity, her daring, and fancied that, like herself, she was at noble feud with that infernal parody of the kingdom of heaven, called Society. She did not well understand her relation to Lady Bellair, concerning whom she was in doubt whether or not she was her legal guardian, but she saw plainly enough that the countess wanted to secure her for her nephew, and this nephew had about him a certain air of perdition, which even the catholic heart of Lady Clementina could not brook. She saw too that, being a mere girl, and having no scope of choice in the limited circle of their visitors, she was in great danger of yielding without a struggle, and she longed to take her in charge like a poor little persecuted kitten, for the possession of which each of a family of children was contending. What if her father had belonged to a rowdy set, was that any reason why his innocent daughter should be devoured, body and soul and possessions, by those of the same set who had not yet perished in their sins? Lady Clementina thanked Heaven that she came herself of decent people, who paid their debts, dared acknowledge themselves in the wrong, and were as honest as if they had been born peasants; and she hoped a shred of the mantle of their good name had dropped upon her, big enough to cover also this poor little thing who had come of no such parentage. With her passion for redemption therefore, she seized every chance of improving her acquaintance with Florimel, and it was her anxiety to gain such a standing in her favour as might further her coveted ministration, that had prevented her from bringing her charge of brutality against Malcolm as soon as she discovered whose groom he was: when she had secured her footing on the peak of her friendship, she would unburden her soul, and meantime the horse must suffer for his mistress—a conclusion in itself a great step in advance, for it went dead against one of her most confidently argued principles, namely, that the pain of any animal is, in every sense, of just as much consequence as the pain of any other, human or inferior: pain is pain, she said; and equal pains are equal wherever they sting;—in which she would have been right, I think, if pain and suffering were the same thing; but, knowing well that the same degree and even the same kind of pain means two very different things in the foot and in the head, I refuse the proposition.

Happily for Florimel, she had by this time made progress enough to venture a proposal—namely, that she should accompany her to a small estate she had on the south coast, with a little ancient house upon it—a strange place altogether, she said—to spend a week or two in absolute quiet—only she must come alone—without even a maid: she would take none herself. This she said because, with the instinct, if not quite insight, of a true nature, she could not endure the woman Caley.

"Will you come with me there for a fortnight?" she concluded.

"I shall be delighted," returned Florimel, without a moment's hesitation. "I am getting quite sick of London. There's no room in it. And there's the spring all outside, and can't get in here! I shall be only too glad to go with you, you dear creature!"

"And on those hard terms—no maid, you know?" insisted Clementina.

"The only thing wanted to make the pleasure complete! I shall be charmed to be rid of her."

"I am glad to see you so independent."

"You don't imagine me such a baby as not to be able to get on without a maid! You should have seen me in Scotland! I hated having a woman about me then. And indeed I don't like it a bit better now—only everybody has one, and your clothes want looking after," added Florimel, thinking what a weight it would be off her if she could get rid of Caley altogether. "—But I *should* like to take my horse," she said. "I don't know what I should do in the country without Abbot."

"Of course; we must have our horses," returned Clementina. "And—yes—you had better bring your groom."

"Please. You will find him very useful. He can do anything and everything—and is so kind and helpful!"

"Except to his horse," Clementina was on the point of saying, but thought again she would first secure the mistress, and bide her time to attack the man.

Before they parted, the two ladies had talked themselves into ecstasies over the anticipated enjoyments of their scheme. It must be carried out at once.

"Let us tell nobody," said Lady Clementina, "and set off to-morrow."

"Enchanting!" cried Florimel, in full response.

Then her brow clouded.

"There is one difficulty, though," she said. "—No man could ride Kelpie with a led horse; and if we had to employ another, Liftore would be sure to hear where we had gone."

"That would spoil all," said Clementina. "But how much better it would be to give that poor creature a rest, and bring the other I see him on sometimes!"

"And by the time we came back, there would not be a living creature, horse or man, anything bigger than a rat, about the stable. Kelpie herself would be dead of hunger, if she hadn't been shot. No, no; where Malcolm goes Kelpie must go. Besides, she's such fun—you can't think!"

"Then I'll tell you what!" cried Clementina, after a moment's pause of perplexity: "we'll *ride* down! It's not a hundred miles, and we can take as many days on the road as we please."

"Better and better!" cried Florimel. "We'll run away with each other.—But what will dear old Bellair say?"

"Never mind her," rejoined Clementina. "She will have nothing to say. You can write and tell her as much as will keep her from being really alarmed. Order your man to get everything ready, and I will instruct mine. He is such a staid old fellow, you know, he will be quite protection. To-morrow morning we shall set out together for a ride in Richmond Park—that lying in our way. You can leave a letter on the breakfast-table, saying you are gone with me for a little quiet. You're not in chancery—are you?"

"I don't know," answered Florimel. "I suppose I'm all right.—Any how, whether I'm in chancery or not, here I am, and going with you; and if chancery don't like it, chancery may come and fetch me."

"Send anything you think you may want to my house. I shall get a box ready, and we will write from some town on our way to have it sent there, and then we can write for it from The Gloom. We shall find all mere *necessaries* there."

So the thing was arranged: they would start quite early the next morning; and that there might be no trouble in the streets, Malcolm should go before with Kelpie, and wait them in the park.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE JOURNEY.

**Malcolm** was overjoyed at the prospect of an escape to the country—and yet more to find that his mistress wanted to have him with her—more still to understand that the journey was to be kept a secret. Perhaps now, far from both Caley and Liftore, he might say something to open her eyes; yet how should he avoid the appearance of a tale-bearer?

It was a sweet fresh morning, late in the spring—those loveliest of hours that unite the seasons, like the shimmering question of green or blue in the feathers of a peacock. He had set out an hour before the rest, and now, a little way within the park, was coaxing Kelpie to stand, that he might taste the morning in peace. The sun was but a few degrees above the horizon, shining with all his heart, and the earth was taking the shine with all hers. "I too am light," she was saying, "although I can but receive it." The trees were covered with baby-leaves, half wrapped in their swaddling clothes, and their breath was a warm aromatic odour in the glittering air. The air and the light seemed one, and Malcolm felt as if his soul were breathing the light into its very depths, while his body was drinking the soft spicy wind. For Kelpie, she was as full of life as if she had been meant for a winged horse, but by some accident of nature the wing-cases had never opened, and the wing-life was for ever trying to get out at her feet. The consequent restlessness, where there was plenty of space as here, caused Malcolm no more discomposure than, in his old fishing-days, a gale with plenty of sea-room. And the song of the larks was one with the light and the air. The budding of the trees was their way of singing; but the larks beat them at that. "What a power of joy," thought Malcolm, "there must be in God, to be able to keep so many larks so full of bliss!" He was going to say—"without getting tired;" but he saw that it was the eternal joy itself that bubbled from their little fountains: weariness there would be the silence of all song, would be death, utter vanishment to the gladness of the universe. The sun would go out like a spark upon burnt paper, and the heart of man would forget the sound of laughter. Then he said to himself: "The larks do not make their own singing; do mortals make their own sighing?" And he saw that at least they might open wider the doors of their hearts to the Perseus Joy that comes to slay the grief-monsters. Then he thought how his life had been widening out with the years. He could not say that it was now more pleasant than it had been; he had Stoicism enough to doubt whether it would ever become so from any mere change of circumstances. Dangers and sufferings that one is able for, are not misfortunes or even hardships—so far from such, that youth delights in them. Indeed he sorely missed the adventure of the herring fishing. Kelpie, however, was as good as a stiff gale. If only all were well with his sister! Then he would go back to Portlossie and have fishing enough. But he must be patient and follow as he was led. At three and twenty, he reflected, Milton was content to seem to himself but a poor creature, and was careful only to be ready for whatever work should hereafter be required of him: such contentment, with such hope and resolve at the back of it, he saw to be the right and the duty both of every man. He whose ambition is to be ready when he is wanted, whatever the work may be, may wait not the less watchful that he is content. His heart grew lighter, his head clearer, and by the time the two ladies with their attendant appeared, he felt such a masterdom over Kelpie as he had never felt before.

They rode twenty miles that day with ease, putting up at the first town. The next day they rode about the same distance. They next day they rode nearly thirty miles. On the fourth, with an early start, and a good rest in the middle, they accomplished a yet greater distance, and at night arrived at The Gloom, Wastbeach—after a journey of continuous delight to three at least of the party, Florimel and Malcolm having especially enjoyed that portion of it which led through Surrey, where England and Scotland meet and mingle in waste, heathery moor, and rich valley. Much talk had passed between the ladies, and Florimel had been set thinking about many things, though certainly about none after the wisest fashion.

A young half-moon was still up when, after riding miles through pine woods, they at length drew near the house. Long before they reached it, however, a confused noise of dogs met them in the forest. Clementina had written to the housekeeper, and every dog about the place, and the dogs were multitudinous, had been expecting her all day, had heard the sound of their horses' hoofs miles off, and had at once begun to announce her approach. Nor were the dogs the only cognisant or expectant animals. Most of the creatures about the place understood that something was happening, and probably associated it with their mistress; for almost every live thing knew her—from the rheumatic cart-horse, forty years of age, and every whit as respectable in Clementina's eyes as her father's old butler, to the wild cats that haunted the lofts and garrets of the old Elizabethan hunting-lodge.

When they dismounted, the ladies could hardly get into the house for dogs; those which could not reach their mistress, turned to Florimel, and came swarming about her and leaping upon her, until, much as she liked animal favour, she would gladly have used her whip—but dared not, because of the presence of their mistress. If the theories of that mistress allowed them anything of a moral nature, she was certainly culpable in refusing them their right to a few cuts of the whip.

Mingled with all the noises of dogs and horses, came a soft nestling murmur that filled up the interspaces of sound which even their tumult could not help leaving. Florimel was too tired to hear it, but Malcolm heard it, and it filled all the interspaces of his soul with a speechless delight. He knew it for the still small voice of the awful sea.

Florimel scarcely cast a glance around the dark old-fashioned room into which she was shown, but went at once to bed, and when the old housekeeper carried her something from the supper-table at which she had been expected, she found her already fast asleep. By the time Malcolm had put Kelpie to rest, he also was a little tired, and lay awake no moment longer than his sister.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### DISCIPLINE.

What with rats and mice, and cats and owls, and creaks and cracks, there was no quiet about the place from night to morning; and what with swallows and rooks, and cocks and kine, and horses and foals, and dogs and pigeons and peacocks, and guinea-fowls and turkeys and geese, and every farm creature but pigs, which, with all her zootrophy, Clementina did not like, no quiet from morning to night. But if there was no quiet, there was plenty of calm, and the sleep of neither brother nor sister was disturbed.

Florimel awoke in the sweetest concert of pigeon-murmuring, duck-diplomacy, fowl-foraging, foal-whinnering—the word wants an *r* in it—and all the noises of rural life. The sun was shining into the room by a window far off at the further end, bringing with him strange sylvan shadows, not at once to be interpreted. He must have been shining for hours, so bright and steady did he shine. She sprang out of bed—with no lazy London resurrection of the old buried, half-sodden corpse, sleepy and ashamed, but with the new birth of the new day, refreshed and strong, like a Hercules-baby. A few aching remnants of stiffness was all that was left of the old fatigue. It was a heavenly joy to think that no Caley would come knocking at her door. She glided down the long room to the sunny window, drew aside the rich old faded curtain, and peeped out. Nothing but pines and pines—Scotch firs all about and everywhere! They came within a few yards of the window. She threw it open. The air was still, the morning sun shone hot upon them, and the resinous odour exhaled from their bark and their needles and their fresh buds, filled the room—sweet and clean. There was nothing, not even a fence, between this wing of the house and the wood.

All through his deep sleep, Malcolm heard the sound of the sea—whether of the phantom-sea in his soul, or of the world-sea to whose murmurs he had listened with such soft delight as he fell asleep, matters little: the sea was with him in his dreams. But when he awoke it was to no musical crushing of water-drops, no half-articulated tones of animal speech, but to tumult and outcry from the stables. It was but too plain that he was wanted. Either Kelpie had waked too soon, or he had overslept himself: she was kicking furiously. Hurriedly induing a portion of his clothing, he rushed down and across the yard, shouting to her as he ran, like a nurse as she runs up the stair to a screaming child. She stopped once to give an eager whinny, and then fell to again. Griffiths, the groom, and the few other men about the place, were looking on appalled. He darted to the corn-bin, got a great pottleful of oats, and shot into her stall. She buried her nose in them like the very demon of hunger, and he left her for the few moments of peace that would follow. He must finish his dressing as fast as he could: already, after four days of travel, which with her meant anything but a straight-forward jog-trot struggle with space, she needed a good gallop! When he returned, he found her just finishing her oats, and beginning to grow angry with her own nose for getting so near the bottom of the manger. While yet there was no worse sign, however, than the fidgetting of her hind quarters, and she was still busy, he made haste to saddle her. But her unusually obstinate refusal of the bit, and his difficulty in making her open her unwilling jaws, gave unmistakable indication of coming conflict. Anxiously he asked the bystanders after some open place where he might let her go—fields or tolerably smooth heath, or sandy beach. He dared not take her through the trees, he said, while she was in such a humour; she would dash herself to pieces. They told him there was a road straight from the stables to the shore, and there miles of pure sand without a pebble. Nothing could be better. He mounted and rode away.

Florimel was yet but half-dressed, when the door of her room opened suddenly, and Lady Clementina darted in—the lovely chaos of her night not more than half as far reduced to order as that of Florimel's. Her moonlight hair, nearly as long as that of the fabled Godiva, was flung wildly about her in heavy masses. Her eyes were wild also; she looked like a holy Maenad. With a glide like the swoop of an avenging angel, she pounced upon Florimel, caught her by the wrist and pulled her towards the door. Florimel was startled, but made no resistance. She half led, half dragged her up a stair that rose from a corner of the hall gallery to the battlements of a little square tower, whence a few yards of the beach, through a chain of slight openings amongst the pines, was visible. Upon that spot of beach, a strange thing was going on—at which afresh Clementina gazed with indignant horror, but Florimel eagerly stared with the forward-borne eyes of a spectator of the Roman arena. She saw Kelpie reared on end, striking out at Malcolm with her forehoofs, and snapping with angry teeth—then upon those teeth receive such a blow from his fist that she swerved, and wheeling, flung her hind hoofs at his head. But Malcolm was too quick for her; she spent her heels in the air, and he had her by the bit. Again she reared, and would have struck at him, but he kept well by her side, and with the powerful bit forced her to rear to her full height. Just as she was falling backwards, he pushed her head from him, and bearing her down sideways, seated himself on it the moment it touched the ground. Then first the two women turned to each other. An arch of victory bowed Florimel's lip; her eyebrows were uplifted; the blood flushed her cheek, and darkened the blue in her wide opened eyes. Lady Clementina's forehead was gathered in vertical wrinkles over her nose, and all about her eyes was contracted as if squeezing from them the flame of indignation, while her teeth and lips were firmly closed. The two made a splendid contrast. When Clementina's gaze fell on her visitor, the fire in her eyes burned more angry still: her soul was stirred by the presence of wrong and cruelty, and here, her guest, and looking her straight in the eyes, was a young woman, one word from whom would stop it all, actually enjoying the sight!

"Lady Lossie, I am ashamed of you!" she said, with severest reproof; and turning from her, she ran down the stair.

Florimel turned again towards the sea. Presently she caught sight of Clementina glimpsing through the pines, "now in glimmer and now in gloom," as she sped swiftly to the shore, and, after a few short minutes of disappearance, saw her emerge upon the space of sand where sat Malcolm on the head of the demoness. But alas! she could only see. She could hardly even hear the sound of the tide.

"MacPhail, are you a man?" cried Clementina, startling him so that in another instant the floundering mare would have been on her feet. With a right noble anger in her face, and her hair flying like a wind-torn cloud, she rushed out of the wood upon him, where he sat quietly tracing a proposition of Euclid on the sand with his whip.

"Ay, and a bold one," was on Malcolm's lips for reply, but he bethought himself in time.

"I am sorry what I am compelled to do should annoy your ladyship," he said.

What with indignation and breathless—she had run so fast—Clementina had exhausted herself in that one exclamation, and stood panting and staring. The black bulk of Kelpie lay outstretched on the yellow sand, giving now and then a sprawling kick or a wamble like a lumpy snake, and her soul commiserated each movement as if it had been the last throe of dissolution, while the grey fire of the mare's one-visible fierce eye, turned up from the shadow of Malcolm's superimposed bulk, seemed to her tender heart a mute appeal for woman's help.

As Malcolm spoke, he cautiously shifted his position, and, half-rising, knelt with one knee where he had sat before, looking observant at Lady Clementina. The champion of oppressed animality soon recovered speech.

"Get off the poor creature's head instantly," she said, with dignified command. "I will permit no such usage of living thing on my ground."

"I am very sorry to seem rude, my lady," answered Malcolm, "but to obey you would perhaps be to ruin my mistress's property. If the mare were to break away, she would dash herself to pieces in the wood."

"You have goaded her to madness."

"I'm the more bound to take care of her then," said Malcolm. "But indeed it is only temper—such temper, however, that I almost believe she is at times possessed of a demon."

"The demon is in yourself. There is nothing in her but what your cruelty has put there. Let her up, I command you."

"I dare not, my lady. If she were to get loose she would tear your ladyship to pieces."

"I will take my chance."

"But I will not, my lady. I know the danger, and have to take care of you who do not. There is no occasion to be uneasy about the mare. She is tolerably comfortable. I am not hurting her—not much. Your ladyship does not reflect how strong a horse's skull is. And you see what great powerful breaths she draws!"

"She is in agony," cried Clementina.

"Not in the least, my lady. She is only balked of her own way, and does not like it."

"And what right have you to balk her of her own way? Has she no right to a mind of her own?"

"She may of course have her mind, but she can't have her way. She has got a master."

"And what right have you to be her master?"

"That my master, my Lord Lossie, gave me the charge of her."

"I don't mean that sort of right; that goes for nothing. What right in the nature of things can you have to tyrannize over any creature?"

"None, my lady. But the higher nature has the right to rule the lower in righteousness. Even you can't have your own way always, my lady."

"I certainly cannot now, so long as you keep in that position. Pray, is it in virtue of *your* being the higher nature that you keep *my* way from *me?*"

"No, my lady. But it is in virtue of right. If I wanted to take your ladyship's property, your dogs would be justified in refusing me my way.—I do not think I exaggerate when I say that, if my mare here had *her* way, there would not be a living creature about your house by this day week."

Lady Clementina had never yet felt upon her the power of a stronger nature than her own. She had had to yield to authority, but never to superiority. Hence her self-will had been abnormally developed. Her very compassion was self-willed. Now for the first time, she continuing altogether unaware of it, the presence of such a nature began to operate upon her. The calmness of Malcolm's speech and the immovable decision of his behaviour told.

"But," she said, more calmly, "your mare has had four long journeys, and she should have rested to-day."

"Rest is just the one thing beyond her, my lady. There is a volcano of life and strength in her you have no conception of. I could not have dreamed of horse like her. She has never in her life had enough to do. I believe that is the chief trouble with her. What we all want, my lady, is a master—a real right master. I've got one myself, and——"

"You mean you want one yourself," said Lady Clementina. "You've only got a mistress, and she spoils you."

"That is not what I meant, my lady," returned Malcolm. "But one thing I know, is, that Kelpie would soon come to grief without me. I shall keep her here till her half-hour is out, and then let her take another gallop."

Lady Clementina turned away. She was defeated. Malcolm knelt there on one knee, with a hand on the mare's shoulder, so calm, so imperturbable, so ridiculously full of argument, that there was nothing more for her to do or say. Indignation, expostulation, were powerless upon him as mist upon a rock. He was the oddest, most incomprehensible of grooms.

Going back to the house, she met Florimel, and turned again with her to the scene of discipline. Ere they reached it, Florimel's delight with all around her had done something to restore Clementina's composure: the place was precious to her, for there she had passed nearly the whole of her childhood. But to anyone with a heart open to the expressions of Nature's countenance, the place could not but have a strange as well as peculiar charm.

Florimel had lost her way. I would rather it had been in the moonlight, but slant sunlight was next best. It shone through a slender multitude of mast-like stems, whose shadows complicated the wonder, while the light seemed amongst them to have gathered to itself properties appreciable by other organs besides the eyes, and to dwell bodily with the trees. The soil was mainly of sand, the soil to delight the long tap-roots of the fir-trees, covered above with a thick layer of slow-forming mould, in the gradual odoriferous decay of needles and cones and flakes of bark and knots of resinous exudation. It grew looser and sandier, and its upper coat thinner, as she approached the shore. The trees shrunk in size, stood farther apart, and grew more individual, sending out knarled boughs on all sides of them, and asserting themselves as the tall slender branchless ones in the social restraint of the thicker wood dared not do. They thinned and thinned, and the sea and the shore came shining through, for the ground sloped to the beach without any intervening abruption of cliff or even bank; they thinned and thinned until all were gone, and the bare long yellow sands lay stretched out on both sides for miles, gleaming and sparkling in the sun, especially at one spot where the water of a little stream wandered about over them, as if it had at length found its home, but was too weary to enter and lose its weariness, and must wait for the tide to come up and take it. But when Florimel reached the strand, she could see nothing of the group she sought: the shore took a little bend, and a tongue of forest came in between.

She was on her way back to the house when she met Clementina, also returning discomfited. Pleased as she was with them, her hostess soon interrupted her ecstasies by breaking out in accusation of Malcolm, not untempered, however, with a touch of dawning respect. At the same time her report of his words was anything but accurate, for as no one can be just without love, so no one can truly report without understanding. But they had not time to discuss him now, as Clementina insisted on Florimel's putting an immediate stop to his cruelty.

When they reached the spot, there was the groom again seated on his animal's head, with a new proposition in the sand before him.

"Malcolm," said his mistress, "let the mare get up. You must let her off the rest of her punishment this time."

Malcolm rose again to his knee.

"Yes, my lady," he said. "But perhaps your ladyship wouldn't mind helping me to unbuckle her girths before she gets to her feet. I want to give her a bath.—Come to this side," he went on, as Florimel advanced to his request, "—round here by her head. If your ladyship would kneel upon it, that would be best. But you mustn't move till I tell you."

"I will do anything you bid me—exactly as you say, Malcolm," responded Florimel.

"There's the Colonsay blood! I can trust that!" cried Malcolm, with a pardonable outbreak of pride in his family. Whether most of his ancestors could so well have appreciated the courage of obedience, is not very doubtful.

Clementina was shocked at the insolent familiarity of her poor little friend's groom, but Florimel saw none, and kneeled, as if she had been in church, on the head of the mare, with the fierce crater of her fiery brain blazing at her knee. Then Malcolm lifted the flap of the saddle, undid the buckles of the girths, and drawing them a little from under her, laid the saddle on the sand, talking all the time to Florimel, lest a sudden word might seem a direction, and she should rise before the right moment had come.

Please, my lady Clementina, will you go to the edge of the wood. I can't tell what she may do when she gets up. And please, my lady Florimel, will you run there too, the moment you get off her head.

When he got her rid of the saddle, he gathered the reins together in his bridle hand, took his whip in the other, and softly and carefully straddled across her huge barrel without touching her.

"Now, my lady!" he said. "Run for the wood."

Florimel rose and fled, heard a great scrambling behind her, and turning at the first tree, which was only a few yards off, saw Kelpie on her hind legs, and Malcolm, whom she had lifted with her, sticking by his knees on her bare back. The moment her fore feet touched the ground, he gave her the spur severely, and after one plunging kick, off they went westward over the sands, away from the sun; nor did they turn before they had dwindled to such a speck that the ladies could not have told by their eyes whether it was moving or not. At length they saw it swerve a little; by and by it began to grow larger; and after another moment or two they could distinguish what it was, tearing along towards them like a whirlwind, the lumps of wet sand flying behind like an upward storm of clods. What a picture it was!—only neither of the ladies was calm enough to see it picturewise: the still sea before, type of the infinite always, and now of its repose; the still straight solemn wood behind, like a past world that had gone to sleep—out of which the sand seemed to come flowing down, to settle in the long sand-lake of the beach; that flameless furnace of life tearing along the shore, betwixt the sea and the land, between time and eternity, guided, but only half controlled, by the strength of a higher will; and the two angels that had issued—whether out of the forest of the past or the sea of the future, who could tell?—and now stood, with hand-shaded eyes, gazing upon that fierce apparition of terrene life.

As he came in front of them, Malcolm suddenly wheeled Kelpie, so suddenly and in so sharp a curve that he made her "turne close to the ground, like a cat, when scratchingly she wheeles about after a mouse," as Sir Philip Sidney says, and dashed her straight into the sea. The two ladies gave a cry, Florimel of delight, Clementina of dismay, for she knew the coast, and that there it shelved suddenly into deep water. But that was only the better to Malcolm: it was the deep water he sought, though he got it with a little pitch sooner than he expected. He had often ridden Kelpie into the sea at Portlossie, even in the cold autumn weather when first she came into his charge, and nothing pleased her better or quieted her more. He was a heavy weight to swim with, but she displaced much water. She carried her head bravely, he balanced sideways, and they swam splendidly. To the eyes of Clementina the mare seemed to be labouring for her life.

When Malcolm thought she had had enough of it, he turned her head to the shore. But then came the difficulty. So steeply did the shore shelve that Kelpie could not get a hold with her hind hoofs to scramble up into the shallow water. The ladies saw the struggle, and Clementina, understanding it, was running in an agony right into the water, with the vain idea of helping them, when Malcolm threw himself off, drawing the reins over Kelpie's head as he fell, and swimming but the length of them shorewards, felt the ground with his feet, and stood. Kelpie, relieved of his weight, floated a little farther on to the shelf, got a better hold with her fore feet, some hold with her hind ones, and was beside him in a moment. The same moment Malcolm was on her back again, and they were tearing off eastward at full stretch. So far did the lessening point recede in the narrowing distance, that the two ladies sat down on the sand, and fell a-talking about Florimel's most uncategorical groom, as Clementina, herself the most uncategorical of women, to use her own scarcely justifiable epithet, called him. She asked if such persons abounded in Scotland. Florimel could but answer that this was the only one she had met with. Then she told her about Richmond Park and Lord Liftore and Epictetus.

"Ah, that accounts for him!" said Clementina. "Epictetus was a Cynic, a very cruel man: he broke his slave's leg once, I remember."

Mr Lenorme told me that *he* was the slave, and that his master broke *his* leg," said Florimel.

"Ah, yes! I daresay.—That *was* it. But it is of little consequence: his principles were severe, and your groom has been his too ready pupil. It is a pity he is such a savage: he might be quite an interesting character.—Can he read?"

"I have just told you of his reading Greek over Kelpie's head," said Florimel, laughing.

"Ah! but I meant English," said Clementina, whose thoughts were a little astray. Then laughing at herself she explained:—"I mean, can he read aloud? I put the last of the Waverley novels in the box we shall have to-morrow, or the next day at latest, I hope; and I was wondering whether he could read the Scotch—as it ought to be read. I have never heard it spoken, and I don't know how to imagine it."

"We can try him," said Florimel. "It will be great fun anyhow. He is *such* a character! You will be *so* amused with the remarks he will make!"

"But can you venture to let him talk to you?"

"If you ask him to read, how will you prevent him? Unfortunately he has thoughts, and they *will* out."

"Is there no danger of his being rude?"

"If speaking his mind about anything in the book be rudeness, he will most likely be rude. Any other kind of rudeness is as impossible to Malcolm as to any gentleman in the land."

"How can you be so sure of him?" said Clementina, a little anxious as to the way in which her friend regarded the young man.

"My father was—yes, I may say so—attached to him—so much so that he—I can't quite say what—but something like made him promise never to leave my service. And this I know for myself, that not once, ever since that man came to us, has he done a selfish thing or one to be ashamed of. I could give you proof after proof of his devotion."

Florimel's warmth did not reassure Clementina; and her uneasiness wrought to the prejudice of Malcolm. She was never quite so generous towards human beings as towards animals. She could not be depended on for justice except to people in trouble, and then she was very apt to be unjust to those who troubled them.

"I would not have you place too much confidence in your Admirable Crichton of menials, Florimel," she said. "There is something about him I cannot get at the bottom of. Depend upon it, a man who can be cruel would betray on the least provocation."

Florimel smiled superior—as she had good reason to do; but Clementina did not understand the smile, and therefore did not like it. She feared the young fellow had already gained too much influence over his mistress.

"Florimel, my love," she said, "listen to me. Your experience is not so ripe as mine. That man is not what you think him. One day or other he will, I fear, make himself worse than disagreeable. How *can* a cruel man be unselfish?"

"I don't think him cruel at all. But then I haven't such a soft heart for animals as you. We should think it silly in Scotland. You wouldn't teach a dog manners at the expense of a howl. You would let him be a nuisance rather than give him a cut with a whip. What a nice mother of children you will make, Clementina! That's how the children of good people are so often a disgrace to them."

"You are like all the rest of the Scotch I ever knew," said Lady Clementina: "the Scotch are always preaching! I believe it is in their blood. You are a nation of parsons. Thank goodness! my morals go no farther than doing as I would be done by. I want to see creatures happy about me. For my own sake even, I would never cause pang to person—it gives me such a pang myself."

"That's the way you are made, I suppose, Clementina," returned Florimel. "For me, my clay must be coarser. I don't mind a little pain myself, and I can't break my heart for it when I see it—except it be very bad—such as I should care about myself.—But here comes the tyrant."

Malcolm was pulling up his mare some hundred yards off. Even now she was unwilling to stop—but it was at last only from pure original objection to whatever was wanted of her. When she did stand she stood stock still, breathing hard.

"I have actually succeeded in taking a little out of her at last, my lady," said Malcolm as he dismounted. "Have you got a bit of sugar in your pocket, my lady? She would take it quite gently now."

Florimel had none, but Clementina had, for she always carried sugar for her horse. Malcolm held the demoness very watchfully, but she took the sugar from Florimel's palm as neatly as an elephant, and let her stroke her nose over her wide red nostrils without showing the least of her usual inclination to punish a liberty with death. Then Malcolm rode her home, and she was at peace till the evening—when he took her out again.

## CHAPTER XL.

### MOONLIGHT.

AND now followed a pleasant time. Wastbeach was the quietest of all quiet neighbourhoods; it was the loveliest of spring-summer weather; and the variety of scenery on moor, in woodland, and on coast, within easy reach of such good horse-women, was wonderful. The first day they rested the horses that would rest, but the next day were in the saddle immediately after an early breakfast. They took the forest way. In many directions were tolerably smooth rides cut, and along them they had good gallops, to the great delight of Florimel after the restraints of Rotten Row, where riding had seemed like dancing a minuet with a waltz in her heart. Malcolm, so far as human companionship went, found it dull, for Lady Clementina's groom regarded him with the contempt of superior age, the most contemptible contempt of all, seeing years are not the wisdom they ought to bring, and the first sign of that is modesty. Again and again his remarks tempted Malcolm to incite him to ride Kelpie, but conscience, the thought of the man's family, and the remembrance that it required all his youthful strength, and that it would therefore be the challenge of the strong to the weak, saved him from the sin, and he schooled himself to the endurance of middle-aged arrogance. For the learning of the lesson he had practice enough: they rode every day, and Griffith did not thaw; but the one thundering gallop he had every morning along the sands with Kelpie, whom * no ordinary day's work was enough to save from the heart-burning ferment of repressed activity, was both preparation and amends for the annoyance.

When his mistress mentioned the proposal of her friend with regard to the new novel, he at once expressed his willingness to attempt compliance, fearing only, he said, that his English would prove offensive and his Scotch unintelligible. The task was nowise alarming to him, for he had read aloud much to the schoolmaster, who had also insisted that he should read aloud when alone, especially verse, in order that he might get all the good of its outside as well as inside—its sound as well as thought, the one being the ethereal body of the other. And he had the best primary qualifications for the art, namely, a delight in the sounds of human speech, a value for the true embodiment of thought, and a good ear, mental as well as vocal, for the assimilation of sound to sense. After these came the quite secondary, yet valuable gift of a pleasant voice, manageable for reflection; and with such an outfit, the peculiarities of his country's utterance, the long-drawn vowels, and the outbreak of feeling in chant-like tones and modulations, might be forgiven, and certainly were forgiven by Lady Clementina, who, even in his presence, took his part against the objections of his mistress. On the whole, they were so much pleased with his first reading, which took place the very day the box arrived, that they concluded to restrain the curiosity of their interest in persons and events, for the sake of the pleasure of meeting them always in the final fulness of local colour afforded them by his utterance. While he

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* According to the grammars, I ought to have written *which*, but it will not do. I could, I think, tell why, but prefer leaving the question to the reader.

read, they busied their fingers with their embroidery; for as yet that graceful work, so lovelily described by Cowper in his *Task*, had not begun to vanish before the crude colours and mechanical vulgarity of Berlin wool, now happily in its turn vanishing like a dry dust-cloud into the limbo of the art-universe:

> The well-depicted flower,
> Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn
> Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
> And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
> Follow the nimble finger of the fair;
> A wreath, that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
> With most success when all besides decay.*

There was not much of a garden about the place, but there was a little lawn amongst the pines, in the midst of which stood a huge old patriarch, with red stem and grotesquely contorted branches: beneath it was a bench, and there, after their return from their two hours' ride, the ladies sat, while the sun was at its warmest, on the mornings of their first and second readings: Malcolm sat on a wheelbarrow. After lunch on the second day, which they had agreed from the first, as ladies so often do, when free of the more devouring sex, should be their dinner, and after due visits paid to a multitude of animals, the desire awoke simultaneously in them for another portion of "St. Ronan's Well." They resolved therefore to send for their reader as soon as they had had tea. But when they sent he was nowhere to be found, and they concluded on a stroll.

Anticipating no further requirement of his service that day, Malcolm had gone out. Drawn by the sea, he took his way through the dim solemn boughless wood, as if to keep a moonlight tryst with his early love. But the sun was not yet down, and among the dark trees, shot through by the level radiance, he wandered, his heart swelling in his bosom with the glory and the mystery. Again the sun was *in* the wood, its burning centre, the marvel of the home which he left in the morning only to return thither at night, and it was now a temple of red light, more gorgeous, more dream-woven than the morning. How he glowed on the red stems of the bare pines, fit pillars for that which seemed temple and rite, organ and anthem in one—the worship of the earth, uplifted to its Hyperion! It was a world of faery; anything might happen in it. Who, in that region of marvel, would start to see suddenly a knight on a great sober war-horse come slowly pacing down the torrent of carmine splendour, flashing it, like the Knight of the Sun himself, in a flood from every hollow, a gleam from every flat, and a star from every round and knob of his armour? As the trees thinned away, and his feet sank deeper in the looser sand, and the sea broke blue out of the infinite, talking quietly to itself of its own solemn swell into being out of the infinite thought unseen, Malcolm felt as if the world with its loveliness and splendour were sinking behind him, and the cool entrancing sweetness of the eternal dreamland of the soul, where the dreams are more real than any sights of the world, were opening wide before his entering feet. "Shall not death be like this?" he said, and threw himself upon the sand, and hid his face and his eyes from it all. For there is this strange thing about all glory embodied in the material, that, when the passion of it rises to its height, we hurry from its presence that its idea may perfect itself in silent and dark and deaf delight. Of its material self we want no more: its real self we have, and it sits at the fountain of our tears. Malcolm hid his face from the source of his gladness, and worshipped the source of that source.

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* "The Winter Evening."

Rare as they are at any given time, there have been, I think, such youths in all ages of the world—youths capable of glorying in the fountain whence issues the torrent of their youthful might. Nor is the reality of their early worship blasted for us by any mistral of doubt that may blow upon their spirit from the icy region of the understanding. The cold fevers, the vital agues that such winds breed, can but prove that not yet has the sun of the perfect arisen upon them; that the Eternal has not yet manifested himself in all regions of their being; that a grander, more obedient, therefore more blissful, more absorbing worship yet, is possible, nay, is essential to them. These chills are but the shivers of the divine nature, unsatisfied, half-starved, banished from its home, divided from its origin, after which it calls in groanings it knows not how to shape into sounds articulate. They are the spirit-wail of the holy infant after the bosom of its mother. Let no man long back to the bliss of his youth—but forward to a bliss that shall swallow even that, and contain it, and be more than it. Our history moves in cycles, it is true, ever returning toward the point whence it started; but it is in the imperfect circles of a spiral it moves; it returns—but ever to a point above the former: even the second childhood, at which the fool jeers, is the better, the truer, the fuller childhood, growing strong to cast off altogether, with the husk of its own enveloping age, that of its family, its country, its world as well. Age is not all decay: it is the ripening, the swelling of the fresh life within, that withers and bursts the husk.

When Malcolm lifted his head, the sun had gone down. He rose and wandered along the sand towards the moon—at length blooming out of the darkening sky, where she had hung all day like a washed-out rag of light, to revive as the sunlight faded. He watched the banished life of her day-swoon returning, until, gathering courage, she that had been no one, shone out fair and clear, in conscious queendom of the night. Then, in the friendly infolding of her dreamlight and the dreamland it created, Malcolm's soul revived as in the comfort of the lesser, the mitigated glory, and, as the moon into radiance from the darkened air, and the nightingale into music from the sleep-stilled world of birds, blossomed from the speechlessness of thought and feeling into a strange kind of brooding song. If the words were half nonsense, the feeling was not the less real. Such as they were, they came almost of themselves, and the tune came with them.

Rose o' my hert,
  Open yer leaves to the lampin' mune;
Into the curls lat her keek an' dert;
  She'll tak' the colour but gi'e ve tune.

Buik o' my brain,
  Open yer neuks to the starry signs;
Lat the een o' the holy luik an' strain
  An' glimmer an' score atween the lines.

Cup o' my sowl,
  Gowd an' diamond an' ruby cup,
Ye're noucht ava but a toom dry bowl,
  Till the wine o' the kingdom fill ye up,

Conscience-glass,
  Mirror the infinite all in thee;
Melt the bounded and make it pass
  Into the tideless, shoreless sea.

World of my life,
  Swing thee round thy sunny track;
Fire and wind and water and strife—
  Carry them al to the glory back.

Ever as he halted for a word, the moonlight, and the low sweet waves on the sands, filled up the pauses to his ear; and there he lay, looking up to the sky and the moon and the rose-diamond stars, his thoughts half-dissolved in feeling, and his feeling half-crystallised to thought.

Out of the dim wood came two lovely forms into the moonlight, and softly approached him—so softly that he knew nothing of their nearness until Florimel spoke.

"Is that MacPhail?" she said.

"Yes, my lady," answered Malcolm, and bounded to his feet.

"What were you singing?"

"You could hardly call it singing, my lady. We should call it crooning in Scotland."

"Croon it again then."

"I couldn't, my lady. It's gone."

"You don't mean to pretend that you were extemporising?"

"I was crooning what came—like the birds, my lady. I couldn't have done it if I had thought anyone was near." Then, half ashamed, and anxious to turn the talk from the threshold of his secret chamber, he said, "Did you ever see a lovelier night, ladies?"

"Not often, certainly," answered Clementina.

She was not quite pleased and not altogether offended at his addressing them dually. A curious sense of impropriety in the state of things bewildered her—she and her friend talking thus, in the moonlight, on the sea-shore, doing nothing, with her friend's groom—and such a groom, his mistress asking him to sing again, and he addressing them both with a remark on the beauty of the night! She had braved the world a good deal, but she did not choose to brave it where nothing was to be had, and she was too honest to say to herself that the world would never know—that there was nothing to brave: she was not one to do that in secret to which she would not hold her face. Yet all the time she had a doubt whether this young man, whom it would certainly be improper to encourage by addressing from any level but one of lofty superiority, did not belong to a higher sphere than theirs; while certainly no man could be more unpresuming, or less forward even when opposing his opinion to theirs. Still—if an angel were to come down and take charge of their horses, would ladies be justified in treating him as other than a servant?

"This is just the sort of night," Malcolm resumed, "when I could almost persuade myself I was not quite sure I wasn't dreaming. It makes a kind of border land betwixt waking and sleeping, knowing and dreaming, in our brain. In a night like this I fancy we feel something like the colour of what God feels when he is making the lovely chaos of a new world, a new kind of world, such as has never been before."

"I think we had better go in," said Clementina to Florimel, and turned away.

Florimel made no objection, and they walked towards the wood.

"You really must get rid of him as soon as you can," said

Clementina, when again the moonless night of the pines had received them: "he is certainly more than half a lunatic. It is almost full moon now," she added, looking up. "I have never seen him so bad."

Florimel's clear laugh rang through the wood.

"Don't be alarmed, Clementina," she said. "He has talked like that ever since I knew him; and if he is mad, at least he is no worse than he has always been. It is nothing but poetry—yeast on the brain, my father used to say. We should have a fish-poet of him—a new thing in the world, he said. He would never be cured till he broke out in a book of poetry. I should be afraid my father would break the catechism and not rest in his grave till the resurrection, if I were to send Malcolm away."

For Malcolm, he was at first not a little mazed at the utter blankness of the wall against which his words had dashed themselves. Then he smiled queerly to himself, and said:

"I used to think ilka bonny lassie bude to be a poetess—for hoo sud she be bonnie but by the informin' hermony o' her bein'?—an' what's that but the poetry o' *the* Poet, the Makar, as they ca'd a poet i' the auld Scots tongue?—but haith! I ken better an' waur noo! There's gane the twa bonniest *I* ever saw, an' I s' lay my heid there's mair poetry in auld man-faced Miss Horn nor in a dizzin like them. Ech! but it's some sair to bide. It's sair upon a man to see a bonny wuman 'at has nae poetry, nae inward lichtsome hermony in her. But it's dooms sairer yet to come upo' ane wantin' cowmon sense! Saw onybody ever sic a gran' sicht as my Leddy Clementina!—an' wha can say but she's weel named frae the hert oot?—as guid at the hert, I'll sweir, as at the een! but eh me! to hear the blether o' nonsense 'at comes oot atween thae twa bonny yetts o' music—an' a' 'cause she winna gi'e her hert rist an' time eneuch to grow bigger, but maun aye be settin' at things richt afore their time, an' her ain fitness for the job! It's sic a faithless kin' o' a w'y that! I could jist fancy I saw her gaein' a' roon' the trees o' a simmer nicht, pittin' hiney upo' the peers an' the peaches, 'cause she cudna lippen to natur' to ripe them sweet eneuch—only 'at she wad never tak the hiney frae the bees. She's jist the pictur' o' Natur' hersel' turnt some dementit. I cud jist fancy I saw her gaein' aboot amo' the ripe corn, on sic a nicht as this o' the mune, happin' 't frae the frost. An' I s' warran' no ae mesh in oor nets wad she lea' ohn clippit open gien the twine had a herrin' by the gills. She's e'en sae pitifu' owre the sinner 'at she winna gi'e him a chance o' growin' better. I won'er gien she believes 'at there's ae great thoucht abune a', an' aneth a', an' roon' a', an' in a'thing. She cudna be in sic a mist o' benevolence and parritch-hertitness gien she cud lippen till a wiser. It's na'e won'er she kens naething aboot poetry but the meeserable sids an' sawdist an' leavin's the gran' leddies sing an' ca' sangs! Nae mair is 't ony won'er she sud tak' me for dementit, gien she h'ard what I was singin'! only I canna think she did that, for I was but croonin' till mysel'."—Malcolm was wrong there, for he was singing out loud and clear.—"That was but a kin' o' an unknown tongue atween Him an' me an' no anither."

## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE SWIFT.

**Florimel** succeeded so far in reassuring her friend as to the safety if not sanity of her groom, that she made no objection to yet another reading from "St Ronan's Well"—upon which occasion an incident occurred that did far more to reassure her than all the attestations of his mistress.

Clementina, in consenting, had proposed, it being a warm sunny afternoon, that they should that time go down to the lake, and sit with their work on the bank, while Malcolm read. This lake, like the whole place, and some of the people in it, was rather strange—not resembling any piece of water that Malcolm at least had ever seen. More than a mile in length, but quite narrow, it lay on the sea-shore—a lake of deep fresh water, with nothing between it and the sea but a bank of sand, up which the great waves came rolling in south-westerly winds, one now and then toppling over—to the disconcerting no doubt of the pikey multitude within.

The head only of the mere came into Clementina's property, and they sat on the landward side of it, on a sandy bank, among the half-exposed roots of a few ancient firs, where a little stream that fed the lake had made a small gully, and was now trotting over a bed of pebbles in the bottom of it. Clementina was describing to Florimel the peculiarities of the place, how there was no outlet to the lake, how the water went filtering through the sand into the sea, how in some parts it was very deep, and what large pike there were in it. Malcolm sat a little aside as usual, with his face towards the ladies, and the book open in his hand, waiting a sign to begin, but looking at the lake, which here was some fifty yards broad, reedy at the edge, dark and deep in the centre. All at once he sprang to his feet, dropping the book, ran down to the brink of the water, undoing his buckled belt and pulling off his coat as he ran, threw himself over the bordering reeds into the pool, and disappeared with a great plash. Clementina gave a scream, and started up with distraction in her face: she made no doubt that in the sudden ripeness of his insanity he had committed suicide. But Florimel, though startled by her friend's cry, laughed, and crowded out assurances that Malcolm knew well enough what he was about. It was longer, however, than she found pleasant, before a black head appeared—yards away, for he had risen at a great slope, swimming towards the other side. What *could* he be after? Near the middle he swam more softly, and almost stopped. Then first they spied a small dark object on the surface. Almost the same moment it rose into the air. They thought Malcolm had flung it up. Instantly they perceived that it was a bird—a swift. Somehow it had dropped into the water, but a lift from Malcolm's hand had restored it to the air of its bliss.

But instead of turning and swimming back, Malcolm held on, and getting out on the farther side, ran down the beach and rushed into the sea, rousing once more the apprehensions of Clementina. The shore sloped rapidly, and in a moment he was in deep water. He swam a few yards out, swam ashore again, ran round the end of the lake, found his coat, and got from it his pocket-handkerchief. Having therewith dried his hands and face, he wrang out the sleeves of his shirt a little, put on his coat, returned to his place, and said, as he took up the book and sat down,

"I beg your pardon, my ladies; but just as I heard my Lady Clementina say *pikes*, I saw the little swift in the water. There was no time to lose. Swiftie had but a poor chance."

As he spoke he proceeded to find the place in the book.

"You don't imagine we are going to have you read in such a plight as that!" cried Clementina.

"I will take good care, my lady. I have books of my own, and I handle them like babies."

"You foolish man! It is of you in your wet clothes, not of the book I am thinking," said Clementina indignantly.

"I'm much obliged to you, my lady, but there's no fear of me. You saw me wash the fresh water out. Salt water never hurts."

"You must go and change nevertheless," said Clementina.

Malcolm looked to his mistress. She gave him a sign to obey, and he rose. He had taken three steps towards the house when Clementina recalled him.

"One word, if you please," she said. "How is it that a man who risks his life for that of a little bird, can be so heartless to a great noble creature like that horse of yours? I cannot understand it!"

"My lady," returned Malcolm with a smile, "I was no more risking my life than you would be in taking a fly out of the milk-jug. And for your question, if your ladyship will only think, you cannot fail to see the difference. Indeed I explained my treatment of Kelpie to your ladyship that first morning in the park, when you so kindly rebuked me for it, but I don't think your ladyship listened to a word I said."

Clementina's face flushed, and she turned to her friend with a "Well!" in her eyes. But Florimel kept her head bent over her embroidery; and Malcolm, no further notice being taken of him walked away.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### ST RONAN'S WELL.

THE next day the reading was resumed, and for several days was regularly continued. Each day, as their interest grew, longer time was devoted to it. They were all simple enough to accept what the author gave them, nor, had a critic of the time been present to instruct them that in this last he had fallen off, would they have heeded him much: for Malcolm, it was the first story by the Great Unknown he had seen. A question however occurring, not of art but of morals, he was at once on the alert. It arose when they reached that portion of the tale in which the true heir to an earldom and its wealth offers to leave all in the possession of the usurper, on the one condition of his ceasing to annoy a certain lady, whom, by villany of the worst, he had gained the power of rendering unspeakably miserable. Naturally enough, at this point Malcolm's personal interest was suddenly excited: here were elements strangely correspondent with the circumstances of his present position. Tyrrel's offer of acquiescence in things as they were, and abandonment of his rights, which, in the story, is so amazing to the man of the world to whom it is first propounded, drew an exclamation of delight from both ladies—from Clementina because of its unselfishness, from Florimel because of its devotion: neither of them was at any time ready to raise a moral question, and least of all where the heart approved. But Malcolm was interested after a different fashion from theirs. Often during the reading he had made remarks and given explanations—not so much to the annoyance of Lady Clementina as she had feared, for since his rescue of the swift, she had been more favourably disposed towards him, and had judged him a little more justly—not that she understood him, but that the gulf between them had contracted. He paused a moment, then said:

"Do you think it was right, my ladies? Ought Mr Tyrrel to have made such an offer?"

"It was most generous of him," said Clementina, not without indignation—and with the tone of one whose answer should decide the question.

"Splendidly generous," replied Malcolm; "—but—I so well remember when Mr Graham first made me see that the question of duty does not always lie between a good thing and a bad thing: there would be no room for casuistry then, he said. A man has very often to decide between one good thing and another. But indeed I can hardly tell without more time to think, whether that comes in here. If a man wants to be generous, it must at least be at his own expense."

"But surely," said Florimel, not in the least aware that she was changing sides, "a man ought to hold by the rights that birth and inheritance give him."

"That is by no means so clear, my lady," returned Malcolm, "as you seem to think. A man *may* be bound to hold by things that are his rights, but certainly not because they are rights. One of the grandest things in having rights is that, being your rights, you may give them up—except, of course, they involve duties with the performance of which the abnegation would interfere."

"I have been trying to think," said Lady Clementina, "what can be the two good things here to choose between."

"That is the right question, and logically put, my lady," rejoined Malcolm, who, from his early training, could not help sometimes putting on the schoolmaster. "The two good things are—let me see—yes—on the one hand the protection of the lady to whom he owed all possible devotion of man to woman, and on the other what he owed to his tenants, and perhaps to society in general—yes—as the owner of wealth and position. There is generosity on the one side and dry duty on the other."

"But this was no case of mere love to the lady, I think," said Clementina. "Did Mr Tyrrel not owe Miss Mowbray what reparation lay in his power? Was it not his tempting of her to a secret marriage, while yet she was nothing more than a girl, that brought the mischief upon her?"

"That is the point," said Malcolm, "that makes the one difficulty. Still, I do not see how there can be much of a question. He could have no right to do fresh wrong for the mitigation of the consequences of preceding wrong—to sacrifice others to atone for injuries done by himself."

"Where would be the wrong to others?" said Florimel, now back to her former position. "Why could it matter to tenants or society which of the brothers happened to be an earl?"

"Only this, that, in the one case, the landlord of his tenants, the earl in society, would be an honourable man, in the other, a villain—a difference which might have consequences."

"But," said Lady Clementina, "is not generosity something more than duty—something higher, something beyond it?"

"Yes," answered Malcolm, "so long as it does not go against duty, but keeps in the same direction, is in harmony with it. I doubt much, though, whether, as we grow in what is good, we shall not come soon to see that generosity is but our duty, and nothing very grand and beyond it. But the man who chooses to be generous at the expense of justice, even if he give up at the same time everything of his own, is but a poor creature beside him who, for the sake of the right, will not only consent to appear selfish in the eyes of men, but will go against his own heart and the comfort of those dearest to him. The man who accepts a crown *may be* more noble than he who lays one down and retires to the desert. Of the worthies who do things by faith, some are sawn asunder, and some subdue kingdoms. The look of the thing is nothing."

Florimel made a neat little yawn over her work. Clementina's hands rested a moment in her lap, and she looked thoughtful. But she resumed her work, and said no more. Malcolm began to read again. Presently Clementina interrupted him. She had not been listening.

"Why should a man want to be better than his neighbours, any more than to be richer?" she said, as if uttering her thoughts aloud.

"Why, indeed," responded Malcolm, "except he wants to become a hypocrite?"

"Then, why do you talk for duty against generosity?"

"Oh!" said Malcolm, for a moment perplexed. He did not at once catch the relation of her ideas. "Does a man ever do his duty," he rejoined at length, "in order to be better than his neighbours? If he does, he won't do it long. A man does his duty because he must. He has no choice but do it."

"If a man has no choice, how is it that so many men choose to do wrong?" asked Clementina.

"In virtue of being slaves and stealing the choice," replied Malcolm.

"You are playing with words," said Clementina.

"If I am, at least I am not playing with things," returned Malcolm. "If you like it better, my lady, I will say that, in declaring he has no choice, the man with all his soul chooses the good, recognizing it as the very necessity of his nature."

"If I know in myself that I have a choice, all you say goes for nothing," persisted Clementina. "I am not at all sure I would not do wrong for the sake of another. The more one preferred what was right, the greater would be the sacrifice."

"If it was for the grandeur of it, my lady, that would be for the man's own sake, not his friend's."

"Leave that out then," said Clementina.

"The more a man loved another, then—say a woman, as here in the story—it seems to me, the more willing would he be that she should continue to suffer rather than cease by wrong. Think, my lady: the essence of wrong is injustice: to help another by wrong is to do injustice to somebody you do not know well enough to love for the sake of one you do know well enough to love. What honest man could think of that twice? The woman capable of accepting such a sacrifice would be contemptible."

"She need not know of it."

"He would know that she needed but to know of it to despise him."

"Then might it not be noble in him to consent for her sake to be contemptible in her eyes?"

"If no others were concerned. And then there would be no injustice, therefore nothing wrong, and nothing contemptible."

"Might not what he did be wrong in the abstract, without having reference to any person?"

"There is no wrong man can do but is a thwarting of the living Right. Surely you believe, my lady, that there is a living Power of right, whose justice is the soul of our justice, who *will* have right done, and causes even our own souls to take up arms against us when we do wrong."

"In plain language, I suppose you mean—Do I believe in a God?"

"That is what I mean, if by a God you mean a being who cares about us, and loves justice—that is, fair play—one whom therefore we wrong to the very heart when we do a thing that is not just."

"I would gladly believe in such a being, if things were so that I could. As they are, I confess it seems to me the best thing to doubt it. I do doubt it very much. How can I help doubting it, when I see so much suffering, oppression, and cruelty in the world? If there were such a being as you say, would he permit the horrible things we hear of on every hand?"

"I used to find that a difficulty. Indeed it troubled me sorely until I came to understand things better. I remember Mr Graham saying once something like this—I did not understand it for months after: 'Every kind-hearted person who thinks a great deal of being comfortable, and takes prosperity to consist in being well-off, must be tempted to doubt the existence of a God.—And perhaps it is well they should be so tempted,' he added."

"Why did he add that?"

"I think because such are in danger of believing in an evil God. And if men believed in an evil God, and had not the courage to defy him, they must sink to the very depths of savagery. At least that is what I ventured to suppose he meant."

Clementina opened her eyes wide, but said nothing. Religious people, she found, could think as boldly as she.

"I remember all about it so well!" Malcolm added, thoughtfully. "We had been talking about the Prometheus of Æschylus—how he would not give in to Jupiter."

"I am trying to understand," said Clementina, and ceased—and a silence fell which for a few moments Malcolm could not break. For suddenly he felt as if he had fallen under the power of a spell. Something seemed to radiate from her silence which invaded his consciousness. It was as if the wind which dwells in the tree of life had waked in the twilight of heaven, and blew upon his spirit. It was not that now first he saw that she was beautiful; the moment his eyes fell upon her that morning in the park, he saw her beautiful as he had never seen woman before. Neither was it that now first he saw her good; even in that first interview her heart had revealed itself to him as very lovely. But the foolishness which flowed from her lips, noble and unselfish as it was, had barred the way betwixt his feelings and her individuality as effectually as if she had been the loveliest of Venuses lying uncarved in the lunar marble of Carrara. There *are* men to whom silliness is an absolute freezing mixture; to whose hearts a plain, sensible woman at once appeals as a woman, while no amount of beauty can serve as sweet oblivious antidote to counteract the nausea produced by folly. Malcolm had found

Clementina irritating, and the more irritating that she was so beautiful. But at the first sound from her lips that indicated genuine and truthful thought, the atmosphere had begun to change; and at the first troubled gleam in her eyes, revealing that she pursued some dim-seen thing of the world of reality, a nameless potency throbbed into the spiritual space betwixt her and him, and embraced them in an aether of entrancing relation. All that had been needed to awake love to her was, that her soul, her self, should look out of its windows—and now he had caught a glimpse of it. Not all her beauty, not all her heart, not all her courage, could draw him while she would ride only a hobby-horse, however tight its skin might be stuffed with emotions. But now who could tell how soon she might be charging in the front line of the Amazons of the Lord—on as real a horse as any in the heavenly army? For was she not thinking—the rarest human operation in the world?

"I will try to speak a little more clearly, my lady," said Malcolm. "If ease and comfort, and the pleasures of animal and intellectual being, were the best things to be had, as they are the only things most people desire, then that maker who did not care that his creatures should possess or were deprived of such, could not be a good God. But if the need with the lack of such things should be the means, the only means, of their gaining something in its very nature so much better that——"

"But," interrupted Clementina, "if they don't care about anything better—if they are content as they are?"

"Should he then who called them into existence be limited in his further intents for the perfecting of their creation, by their notions concerning themselves who cannot add to their life one cubit?—such notions being often consciously dishonest? If he knows them worthless without something that he can give, shall he withhold his hand because they do not care that he should stretch it forth? Should a child not be taught to ride because he is content to run on foot."

"But the means, according to your own theory, are so frightful!" said Clementina.

"But suppose he knows that the barest beginnings of the good he intends them would not merely reconcile them to those means, but cause them to choose his will at any expense of suffering! I tell you, Lady Clementina," continued Malcolm, rising, and approaching her a step or two, "if I had not the hope of one day being good like God himself, if I thought there was no escape out of the wrong and badness I feel within me and know I am not able to rid myself of without supreme help, not all the wealth and honours of the world could reconcile me to life."

"You do not know what you are talking of," said Clementina, coldly and softly, without lifting her head.

"I do," said Malcolm.

"You mean you would kill yourself but for your belief in God?"

"By life, I meant *being*, my lady. If there were no God, I dared not kill myself, lest worse should be waiting me in the awful voids beyond. If there be a God, living or dying is all one—so it be what he pleases."

"I have read of saints," said Clementina, with cool dissatisfaction in her tone, "uttering such sentiments,"——"*Sentiments!*" said Malcolm to himself——"and I do not doubt such were felt or at least imagined by them; but I fail to understand how, even supposing these things true, a young man like yourself should, in the midst of a busy world, and with an occupation which, to say the least,——"

Here she paused. After a moment Malcolm ventured to help her.

"Is so far from an ideal one—would you say, my lady?"

"Something like that," answered Clementina, and concluded—"I wonder how *you* can have arrived at such ideas."

"There is nothing wonderful in it, my lady," returned Malcolm. "Why should not a youth, a boy, a child, for as a child I thought about what the kingdom of heaven could mean, desire with all his might that his heart and mind should be clean, his will strong, his thoughts just, his head clear, his soul dwelling in the place of life? Why should I not desire that my life should be a complete thing, and an outgoing of life to my neighbour? Some people are content not to do mean actions: I want to become incapable of a mean thought or feeling; and so I shall be before all is done."

"Still, how did you come to begin so much earlier than others?"

"All I know as to that, my lady, is that I had the best man in the world to teach me."

"And why did not I have such a man to teach me? I could have learned of such a man too."

"If you are able now, my lady, it does not follow that it would have been the best thing for you sooner. Some children learn far better for not being begun early, and will get before others who have been at it for years. As you grow ready for it, somewhere or other you will find what is needful for you—in a book, or a friend, or, best of all in your own thoughts—the eternal thought speaking in your thought."

It flashed through her mind, "Can it be that I have found it now—on the lips of a groom?"

Was it her own spirit or another that laughed strangely within her.

"Well, as you seem to know so much better than other people," she said, "I want you to explain to me how the God in whom you profess to believe can make use of such cruelties. It seems to me more like the revelling of a demon."

"My lady!" remonstrated Malcolm, "I never pretended to explain. All I say is, that, if I had reason for hoping there was a God, and if I found, from my own experience and the testimony of others, that suffering led to valued good, I should think, hope, expect to find that he caused suffering for reasons of the highest, purest and kindest import, such as when understood must be absolutely satisfactory to the sufferers themselves. If a man cannot believe that, and if he thinks the pain the worst evil of all, then of course he cannot believe there is a good God. Still, even then, if he would lay claim to being a lover of truth, he ought to give the idea—the mere *idea* of God fair play, lest there should be a good God after all, and he all his life doing him the injustice of refusing him his trust and obedience."

"And how are we to give the mere idea of him fair play?" asked Clementina, rather contemptuously. But I think she was fighting emotion, confused and troublesome.

"By looking to the heart of whatever claims to be a revelation of him."

"It would take a lifetime to read the half of such."

"I will correct myself, and say—whatever of the sort has best claims on *your* regard—whatever any person you look upon as good, believes and would have you believe—at the same time doing diligently what you *know* to be right; for, if there be a God, that must be his will, and, if there be not, it remains our duty."

All this time, Florimel was working away at her embroidery, a little smile of satisfaction flickering on her face. She was pleased to hear her clever friend talking so with her strange vassal. As to what they were saying, she had no doubt it was all right, but to her it was not interesting. She was mildly debating with herself whether she should tell her friend about Lenorme.

Clementina's work now lay on her lap and her hands on her work, while her eyes at one time gazed on the grass at her feet, at another searched Malcolm's face with a troubled look. The light of Malcolm's candle was beginning to penetrate into her dusky room, the power of his faith to tell upon the weakness of her unbelief. There is no strength in unbelief. Even the unbelief of what is false is no source of might. It is the truth shining from behind that gives the strength to disbelieve. But into the house where the refusal of the bad is followed by no embracing of the good—the house empty and swept and garnished—the bad will return, bringing with it seven evils that are worse.

If something of that sacred mystery, holy in the heart of the Father, which draws together the souls of man and woman, was at work between them, let those scoff at the mingling of love and religion who know nothing of either; but man or woman who, loving woman or man, has never in that love lifted the heart to the Father, and everyone whose divine love has not yet cast at least an arm round the human love, must take heed what they think of themselves, for they are yet but paddlers in the tide of the eternal ocean. Love is a lifting no less than a swelling of the heart. What changes, what metamorphoses, transformations. purifications, glorifications, this or that love must undergo ere it take its eternal place in the kingdom of heaven, through all its changes yet remaining, in its one essential root, the same, let the coming redemption reveal. The hope of all honest lovers will lead them to the vision. Only let them remember that love must dwell in the will as well as in the heart.

But whatever the nature of Malcolm's influence upon Lady Clementina, she resented it, thinking towards and speaking to him repellently. Something in her did not like him. She knew he did not approve of her, and she did not like being disapproved of. Neither did she approve of him. He was pedantic—and far too good for an honest and brave youth: not that she could say she had seen dishonesty or cowardice in him, or that she could have told which vice she would prefer to season his goodness withal, and bring him to the level of her ideal. And then, for all her theories of equality, he was a groom—therefore to a lady ought to be repulsive—at least when she found him intruding into the chambers of her thoughts—personally intruding—yes, and met there by some traitorous feelings whose behaviour she could not understand. She resented it all, and felt towards Malcolm as if he were guilty of forcing himself into the sacred presence of her bosom's queen—whereas it was his angel that did so, his Idea, over which he had no control. Clementina would have turned that Idea out, and when she found she could not, her soul started up wrathful, in maidenly disgust with her heart, and cast resentment upon everything in him whereon it would hang. She had not yet, however, come to ask herself any questions; she had only begun to fear that a woman to whom a person from the stables could be interesting, even in the form of an unexplained riddle, must be herself a person of low tastes; and that, for all her pride in coming of honest people, there must be a drop of bad blood in her somewhere.

For a time her eyes had been fixed on her work, and there had been silence in the little group.

"My lady!" said Malcolm, and drew a step nearer to Clementina.

She looked up. How lovely she was with the trouble in her eyes! Thought Malcolm, "If only she were what she might be! If the form were but filled with the spirit! the body with life!"

"My lady!" he repeated, just a little embarrassed, "I should like to tell you one thing that came to me only lately—came to me when thinking over the hard words you spoke to me that day in the park. But it is something so awful that I dare not speak of it except you will make your heart solemn to hear it."

He stopped, with his eyes questioning hers. Clementina's first thought once more was madness, but as she steadily returned his look, her face grew pale, and she gently bowed her head in consent.

"I will try then," said Malcolm. "—Everybody knows what few think about, that once there lived a man who, in the broad face of prejudiced respectability, truth-hating hypocrisy, commonplace religion, and dull book-learning, affirmed that he knew the secret of life, and understood the heart and history of men—who wept over their sorrows, yet worshipped the God of the whole earth, saying that he had known him from eternal days. The same said that he came to do what the Father did, and that he did nothing but what he had learned of the Father. They killed him, you know, my lady, in a terrible way that one is afraid even to think of. But he insisted that he laid down his life; that he allowed them to take it. Now I ask whether that grandest thing, crowning his life, the yielding of it to the hand of violence, he had not learned also from his Father. Was his death the only thing he had not so learned? If I am right, and I do not say *if* in doubt, then the suffering of those three terrible hours was a type of the suffering of the Father himself in bringing sons and daughters through the cleansing and glorifying fires, without which the created cannot be made the very children of God, partakers of the divine nature and peace. Then from the lowest, weakest tone of suffering, up to the loftiest pitch, the divinest acme of pain, there is not one pang to which the sensorium of the universe does not respond; never an untuneful vibration of nerve or spirit but thrills beyond the brain or the heart of the sufferer to the brain, the heart of the universe; and God, in the simplest, most literal, fullest sense, and not by sympathy alone, suffers *with* his creatures."

"Well, but he is able to bear it; they are not: I cannot bring myself to see the right of it."

"Nor will you, my lady, so long as you cannot bring yourself to see the good they get by it.—My lady, when I was trying my best with poor Kelpie, you would not listen to me."

"You are ungenerous," said Clementina, flushing.

"My lady," persisted Malcolm, "you would not understand me. You denied me a heart because of what seemed in your eyes cruelty. I knew that I was saving her from death at the least, probably from a life of torture: God may be good, though to you his government may seem to deny it. There is but one way God cares to govern—the way of the Father-king—and that way is at hand.—But I have yet given you only the one half of my theory: If God feels pain, then he puts forth his will to bear and subject that pain; if the pain comes to him from his creature, living in him, will the endurance of God be confined to himself, and not, in its turn, pass beyond the bounds of his individuality, and react upon the sufferer to his sustaining? I do not mean that sustaining which a man feels from knowing his will one with God's and God *with* him, but such sustaining as those his creatures also may have who do not or cannot know whence the sustaining comes. I believe that the endurance of God goes forth to uphold, that his patience is strength to his creatures, and that, while the whole creation may well groan, its suffering is more bearable therefore than it seems to the repugnance of our regard."

"That is a dangerous doctrine," said Clementina.

"Will it then make the cruel man more cruel to be told that God is caring for the tortured creature from the citadel of whose life he would force an answer to save his own from the sphinx that must at last devour him, let him answer ever so wisely? Or will it make the tender less pitiful to be consoled a little in the agony of beholding what they cannot alleviate? Many hearts are from sympathy as sorely in need of comfort as those with whom they suffer. And to such I have one word more—to your heart, my lady, if it will consent to be consoled: The animals, I believe, suffer less than we, because they scarcely think of the past, and not at all of the future. It is the same with children, Mr Graham says; they suffer less than grown people, and for the same reason. To get back something of this privilege of theirs, we have to be obedient and take no thought for the morrow."

Clementina took up her work. Malcolm walked away.

"Malcolm," cried his mistress, "are you not going on with the book?"

"I hope your ladyship will excuse me," said Malcolm. "I would rather not read more just at present."

It may seem incredible that one so young as Malcolm should have been able to talk thus, and indeed my report may have given words more formal and systematic than his really were. For the *matter* of them, it must be remembered that he was not young in the effort to do and understand; and that the advantage to such a pupil of such a teacher as Mr Graham is illimitable.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### A PERPLEXITY.

AFTER Malcolm's departure, Clementina attempted to find what Florimel thought of the things her strange groom had been saying: she found only that she neither thought at all about them, nor had a single true notion concerning the matter of their conversation. Seeking to interest her in it and failing, she found however that she had greatly deepened its impression upon herself.

Florimel had not yet quite made up her mind whether or not she should open her heart to Clementina, but she approached the door of it in requesting her opinion upon the matter of marriage between persons of social conditions widely parted—"frightfully sundered," she said. Now Clementina was a radical of her day, a reformer, a leveller—one who complained bitterly that some should be so rich, and some so poor. In this she was perfectly honest. Her own wealth, from a vague sense of unrighteousness in the possession of it, was such a burden to her, that she threw it away where often it made other people stumble if not fall. She professed to regard all men as equal, and believed that she did so. She was powerful in her contempt of the distinctions made between certain of the classes, but had signally failed in some bold endeavours to act as if they had no existence except in the whims of society. As yet no man had sought her nearer regard for whom she would deign to cherish even friendship. As to marriage, she professed, right honestly, an entire disinclination, even aversion to it, saying to herself that if ever she should marry it must be, for the sake of protest and example, one notably beneath her in social condition. He must be a gentleman, but his claims to that rare distinction should lie only in himself, not his position, in what he was, not what he had. But it is one thing to have opinions, and another to be called upon to show them beliefs; it is one thing to declare all men equal, and another to tell the girl who looks up to you for advice, that she ought to feel herself at perfect liberty to marry—say a groom; and when Florimel proposed the general question, Clementina might well have hesitated. And indeed she did hesitate—but in vain she tried to persuade herself that it was solely for the sake of her young and inexperienced friend that she did so. As little could she honestly say that it was from doubt of the principles she had so long advocated. Had Florimel been open with her, and told her what sort of inferior was in her thoughts, instead of representing the gulf between them as big enough to swallow the city of Rome; had she told her that he was a gentleman, a man of genius and gifts, noble and large-hearted, and indeed better-bred than any other man she knew, the fact of his profession would only have clenched Lady Clementina's decision in his favour; and if Florimel had been honest enough to confess the encouragement she had given him—nay, the absolute love-passages there had been, Clementina would at once have insisted that her friend should write an apology for her behaviour to him, should dare the dastard world, and offer to marry him when he would. But, Florimel putting the question as she did, how should Clementina imagine anything other than that it referred to Malcolm? and a strange confusion of feeling was the consequence. Her thoughts heaved in her like the half-shaped monsters of a spiritual chaos, and amongst them was one she could not at all identify. A direct answer she found impossible. She found also that in presence of Florimel, so much younger than herself, and looking up to her for advice, she dared not even let the questions now pressing for entrance appear before her consciousness. She therefore declined giving an answer of any sort—was not prepared with one, she said; much was to be considered; no two cases were just alike.

They were summoned to tea, after which she retired to her room, shut the door, and began to think—an operation which, seldom easy if worth anything, was in the present case peculiarly difficult, both because Clementina was not used to it, and the subject-object of it was herself. I suspect that self-examination is seldom the most profitable, certainly it is sometimes the most unpleasant, and always the most difficult of moral actions—that is, to perform after a genuine fashion. I know that very little of what passes for it has the remotest claim to reality; and I will not say it has never to be done; but I am certain that a good deal of the energy spent by some devout and upright people on trying to understand themselves and their own motives, would be expended to better purpose, and with far fuller attainment even in regard to that object itself, in the endeavour to understand God, and what he would have us to do.

Lady Clementina's attempt was as honest as she dared make it. It went something after this fashion:

"How is it possible I should counsel a young creature like that, with all her gifts and privileges, to marry a groom—to bring the stable into her chamber? If I did—if she did, has she the strength to hold her face to it?—Yes, I know how different he is from any other groom that ever rode behind a lady! but does she understand him? Is she capable of such a regard for him as could outlast a week of closer intimacy? At her age it is impossible she should know what she was doing in daring such a thing. It would be absolute ruin to her. And how could I advise her to do what I could not do myself?—But then if she is in love with him?"

She rose and paced the room—not hurriedly—she never did anything hurriedly—but yet with unleisurely steps, until, catching sight of herself in the glass, she turned away as from an intruding and unwelcome presence, and threw herself on her couch, burying her face in the pillow. Presently, however, she rose again, her face glowing, and again walked up and down the room—almost swiftly now. I can but indicate the course of her thoughts.

"If what he says be true!—It opens another and higher life.—What a man he is! and so young!—Has he not convicted me of feebleness and folly, and made me ashamed of myself?—What better thing could man or woman do for another than lower her in her own haughty eyes, and give her a chance of becoming such as she had but dreamed of the shadow of?—He is a gentleman—every inch! Hear him talk!—Scotch, no doubt, —and—well—a *little* long-winded—a bad fault at his age! But see him ride!—see him swim!—and to save a bird!—But then he is hard—severe at best! All religious people are so severe! They think they are safe themselves, and so can afford to be hard on others! He would serve his wife the same as his mare if he thought she required it!—And I *have* known women for whom it might be the best thing. I am a fool! a soft-hearted idiot! He told me I would give a baby a lighted candle if it cried for it.—Or didn't he? I believe he never uttered a word of the sort; he only thought it."—As she said this, there came a strange light in her eyes, and the light seemed to shine from all around them as well as from the orbs themselves.

Suddenly she stood still as a statue in the middle of the room, and her face grew white as the marble of one. For a minute she stood thus—without a definite thought in her brain. The first that came was something like this: "Then Florimel *does* love him!—and wants help to decide whether she shall marry him or not! Poor weak little wretch!—Then if I were in love with him, I would marry him—would I?—It is well, perhaps, that I'm not!—But she! he is ten times too good for her! He would be utterly thrown away on her! But I am *her* counsel, not his; and what better could come to her than have such a man for a husband; and instead of that contemptible Liftore, with his grand earldom ways and proud nose! He has little to be proud of that must take to his rank for it! Fancy a right man condescending to be proud of his own rank! Pooh! But this groom is a man! all a man! grand from the centre out, as the great God made him!—Yes, it must be a great God that made such a man as that!—that is, if he *is* the same he looks—the same all through!—Perhaps there are more Gods than one, and one of them is the devil, and made Liftore! But am I bound to give her advice? Surely not. I may refuse. And rightly too! A woman that marries from advice, instead of from a mighty love, is wrong. I need *not* speak. I shall just tell her to consult her own heart—and conscience, and follow them.—But, gracious me! am *I* then going to fall in love with the fellow?—this stable-man who pretends to know his maker! Certainly not. There is *nothing* of the kind in my thoughts. Besides, how should *I* know what falling in love means? I never was in love in my life, and don't mean to be. If I were so foolish as imagine myself in any danger, would I be such a fool as be caught in it? I should think not indeed! What if I *do* think of this man in a way I never thought of anyone before, is there anything odd in that? How should I help it when he is unlike anyone I ever saw before? One must think of people as one finds them. Does it follow that I have power over myself no longer, and must go where any chance feeling may choose to lead me?"

Here came a pause. Then she started, and once more began walking up and down the room, now hurriedly indeed.

"I will *not* have it!" she cried aloud—and checked herself, dashed at the sound of her own voice. But her soul went on loud enough for the thought-universe to hear. "There *can't* be a God, or he would never subject his women to what they don't choose. If a God had made them, he would have them queens over themselves at least—and I *will* be queen, and then perhaps a God did make me. A slave to things inside myself!—thoughts and feelings I refuse, and which I *ought* to have control over! I don't want this in me, yet I can't drive it out! I *will* drive it out. It is not me. A slave on my own ground! worst slavery of all!—It will not go.—That must be because I do not will it strong enough. And if I don't *will* it—my God!—what does that mean?—That I am a slave already?"

Again she threw herself on her couch, but only to rise and yet again pace the room.

"Nonsense! it is *not* love. It is merely that nobody could help thinking about one who had been so much before her mind for so long—one too who had made her think. Ah! there, I do believe, lies the real secret of it all!—There's the main cause of my trouble—and nothing worse! I must not be foolhardy though, and remain in danger, especially as, for anything I can tell, he may be in love with that foolish child. People, they say, like people that are not at all like themselves. Then I am sure he might like me!—She *seems* to be in love with him! I know she cannot be half a quarter in real love with him: it's not in her."

She did not rejoin Florimel that evening: it was part of the understanding between the ladies that each should be at absolute liberty. She slept little during the night, starting awake as often as she began to slumber, and before the morning came was a good deal humbled. All sorts of means are kept at work to make the children obedient and simple and noble. Joy and sorrow are servants in God's nursery; pain and delight, ecstasy and despair, minister in it; but amongst them there is none more marvellous in its potency than that mingling of all pains and pleasures to which we specially give the name of Love.

When she appeared at breakfast, her countenance bore traces of her suffering, but a headache, real enough, though little heeded in the commotion upon whose surface it floated, gave answer to the not very sympathetic solicitude of Florimel. Happily the day of their return was near at hand. Some talk there had been of protracting their stay, but to that Clementina avoided any farther allusion. She must put an end to an intercourse which she was compelled to admit was, at least, in danger of becoming dangerous. This much she had with certainty discovered concerning her own feelings, that her heart grew hot and cold at the thought of the young man belonging more to the mistress who could not understand him than to herself who imagined she could; and it wanted no experience in love to see that it was therefore time to be on her guard against herself, for to herself she was growing perilous.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE MIND OF THE AUTHOR.

THE next was the last day of the reading. They must finish the tale that morning, and on the following set out to return home, travelling as they had come. Clementina had not the strength of mind to deny herself that last indulgence—a long four days' ride in the company of this strangest of attendants. After that, if not the deluge, yet a few miles of Sahara.

"'It is the opinion of many that he has entered into a Moravian mission, for the use of which he had previously drawn considerable sums,'" read Malcolm, and paused, with book half closed.

"Is that all?" asked Florimel.

"Not quite, my lady," he answered. "There isn't much more, but I was just thinking whether we hadn't come upon something worth a little reflection—whether we haven't here a window into the mind of the author of Waverley, whoever he may be, Mr Scott, or another."

"You mean?" said Clementina, interrogatively, and looked up from her work, but not at the speaker.

"I mean, my lady, that perhaps we here get a glimpse of the author's own opinions, or feelings rather, perhaps."

"I do not see what of the sort you can find there," returned Clementina.

"Neither should I, my lady, if Mr Graham had not taught me how to find Shakspere in his plays. A man's own nature, he used to say, must lie at the heart of what he does, even though not another man should be sharp enough to find him there. Not a hypocrite, the most consummate, he would say, but has his hypocrisy written in every line of his countenance and motion of his fingers. The heavenly Lavaters can read it, though the earthly may not be able."

"And you think you can find him out?" said Clementina, dryly.

"Not the hypocrite, my lady, but Mr Scott here. He is only round a single corner. And one thing is—he believes in a God."

"How do you make that out?"

"He means this Mr Tyrrel for a fine fellow, and on the whole approves of him—does he not, my lady?"

"Certainly."

"Of course all that duelling is wrong. But then Mr Scott only half disapproves of it.—And it is almost a pity it is wrong," remarked Malcolm with a laugh; "it is such an easy way of settling some difficult things. Yet I hate it. It's so cowardly. I may be a better shot than the other, and know it all the time. He may know it too, and have twice my courage. And I may think him in the wrong, when he *knows* himself in the right.—There *is* one man I have felt as if I should like to kill. When I was a boy I killed the cats that ate my pigeons."

A look of horror almost distorted Lady Clementina's countenance.

"I don't know what to say next, my lady," he went on, with a smile, "because I have no way of telling whether you looked shocked for the cats I killed, or the pigeons they killed, or the man I would rather see killed than have him devour more of my—white doves," he concluded sadly, with a little shake of the head.—"But, please God," he resumed, "I shall manage to keep them from him, and let him live to be as old as Methuselah if he can, even if he should grow in cunning and wickedness all the time. I wonder how he will feel when he comes to see what a sneaking cat he is. But this is not what we set out for.—Mr Tyrrel, then, the author's hero, joins the Moravians at last."

"What are they?" questioned Clementina.

"Simple, good, practical Christians, I believe," answered Malcolm.

"But he only does it when disappointed in love."

"No, my lady; he is not disappointed. The lady is only dead."

Clementina stared a moment—then dropped her head as if she understood. Presently she raised it again and said,

"But, according to what you said the other day, in doing so he was forsaking altogether the duties of the station in which God had called him."

"That is true. It would have been a far grander thing to do his duty where he was, than to find another place and another duty. An earldom allotted is better than a mission preferred."

"And at least you must confess," interrupted Clementina, "that he only took to religion because he was unhappy."

"Certainly, my lady, it is the nobler thing to seek God in the days of gladness, to look up to him in trustful bliss when the sun is shining. But if a man be miserable, if the storm is coming down on him, what is he to do? There is nothing mean in seeking God then, though it would have been nobler to seek him before.—But to return to the matter in hand: the author of Waverley makes his noble-hearted hero, whom assuredly he had no intention of disgracing, turn Moravian; and my conclusion from it is that, in his judgment, nobleness leads in the direction of religion; that he considers it natural for a noble mind to seek comfort there for its deepest sorrows."

"Well, it may be so; but what is religion without consistency in action?" said Clementina.

"Nothing," answered Malcolm.

"Then how can you, professing to believe as you do, cherish such feelings towards any man as you have just been confessing?"

"I don't cherish them, my lady. But I succeed in avoiding hate better than suppressing contempt, which perhaps is the worse of the two. There may be some respect in hate."

Here he paused, for here was a chance that was not likely to recur. He might say before two ladies what he could not say before one. If he could but rouse Florimel's indignation! Then at any suitable time only a word more would be needful to direct it upon the villain. Clementina's eyes continued fixed upon him. At length he spoke.

"I will try to make two pictures in your mind, my lady, if you will help me to paint them. In *my* mind they are not *painted* pictures.—A long sea-coast, my lady, and a stormy night;—the sea-horses rushing in from the north-east, and the snow-flakes beginning to fall. On the margin of the sea a long dune or sand-bank, and on the top of it, her head bare, and her thin cotton dress nearly torn from her by the wind, a young woman, worn and white, with an old faded tartan shawl tight about her shoulders, and the shape of a baby inside it, upon her arm."

"Oh! she doesn't mind the cold," said Florimel. "When I was there, I didn't mind it a bit."

"She does not mind the cold," answered Malcolm; "she is far too miserable for that."

"But she has no business to take the baby out on such a night," continued Florimel, carelessly critical. "You ought to have painted her by the fireside. They have all of them firesides to sit at. I have seen them through the windows many a time."

"Shame or cruelty had driven her from it," said Malcolm, "and there she was."

"Do you mean you saw her yourself wandering about?" asked Clementina.

"Twenty times, my lady."

Clementina was silent.

"Well, what comes next?" said Florimel.

"Next comes a young gentleman;—but this is a picture in another frame, although of the same night;—a young gentleman in evening dress, sipping his madeira, warm and comfortable, in the bland temper that should follow the best of dinners, his face beaming with satisfaction after some boast concerning himself, or with silent success in the concoction of one or two compliments to have at hand when he joins the ladies in the drawing-room."

"Nobody can help such differences," said Florimel. "If there were nobody rich, who would there be to do anything for the poor? It's not the young gentleman's fault that he is better born and has more money than the poor girl."

"No," said Malcolm; "but what if the poor girl has the young gentleman's child to carry about from morning to night."

"Oh, well! I suppose she's paid for it," said Florimel, whose innocence must surely have been supplemented by some stupidity, born of her flippancy.

"Do be quiet, Florimel," said Clementina. "You don't know what you are talking about."

Her face was in a glow, and one glance at it set Florimel's in a flame. She rose without a word, but with a look of mingled confusion and offence, and walked away. Clementina gathered her work together. But ere she followed her, she turned to Malcolm, looked him calmly in the face, and said,

"No one can blame you for hating such a man."

"Indeed, my lady, but some one would—the only one for whose praise or blame we ought to care more than a straw or two. He tells us we are neither to judge nor to hate. But—"

"I cannot stay and talk with you," said Clementina. "You must pardon me if I follow your mistress."

Another moment and he would have told her all, in the hope of her warning Florimel. But she was gone.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE RIDE HOME.

FLORIMEL was offended with Malcolm: he had put her confidence in him to shame, speaking of things to which he ought not once to have even alluded. But Clementina was not only older than Florimel, but in her loving endeavours for her kind, had heard many a pitiful story, and was now saddened by the tale, not shocked at the teller. Indeed, Malcolm's mode of acquainting her with the grounds of the feeling she had challenged pleased both her heart and her sense of what was becoming; while, as a partisan of women, finding a man also of their part, she was ready to offer him the gratitude of all womankind in her one typical self. "What a rough diamond is here!" she thought. "Rough!" echoed her heart: "how is he rough? What fault could the most fastidious find with his manners? True, he speaks as a servant—and where would be his manners if he did not? But neither in tone, expression, nor way of thinking, is he in the smallest degree servile. He is like a great pearl, clean out of the sea—bred, it is true, in the midst of strange surroundings, but pure as the moonlight; and if a man, so environed, yet has grown so grand, what might he not become with such privileges as ——!"

Good Clementina—what did she mean? Did she imagine that such mere gifts as she might give him, could do more for him than the great sea, with the torment and conquest of its winds and tempests? more than his own ministrations of love, and victories over passion and pride? What the final touches of the shark-skin are to the marble that stands lord of the flaming bow, that only can wealth and position be to the man who has yielded neither to the judgments of the world nor the drawing of his own inclinations, and so has submitted himself to the chisel and mallet of his maker. Society is the barber who trims a man's hair, often very badly too—and pretends he made it grow. If her owner should take her, body and soul, and make of her being a gift to his—ah, then, indeed! But Clementina was not yet capable of perceiving that, while what she had in her thought to offer *might* hurt him, it *could* do him little good. Her feeling concerning him, however, was all the time far indeed from folly. Not for a moment did she imagine him in love with her. Possibly she admired him too much to attribute to him such an intolerable and insolent presumption as that would have appeared to her own inferior self. Still, she was far indeed from certain, were she, as befits the woman so immeasurably beyond even the aspiration of the man, to make him offer implicit of hand and havings, that he would reach out his to take them. And certainly that she was not going to do!—in which determination, whether she knew it or not, there was as much modesty and gracious doubt of her own worth as there was pride and maidenly recoil. In one resolve she was confident, that her behaviour towards him should be such as to keep him just where he was, affording him no smallest excuse for taking one step nearer: and they would soon be in London, where she would see nothing, or next to nothing more of him. But should she ever cease to thank God, that was, if ever she came to find him, that in this groom he had shown her what he could do in the way of making a man! Heartily she wished she knew a nobleman or two like him. In the meantime she meant to enjoy—with carefulness—the ride to London, after which things should be as before.

The morning arrived; they finished breakfast; the horses came round and stood at the door—all but Kelpie. The ladies mounted. Ah, what a morning to leave the country and go back to London! The sun shone clear on the dark pine-woods; the birds were radiant in song; all under the trees the ferns were unrolling each its mystery of ever generating life; the soul of the summer was there whose mere idea sends the heart into the eyes, while itself flits mocking from the cage of words. A gracious mystery it was—in the air, in the sun, in the earth, in their own hearts. The lights of heaven mingled and played with the shadows of the earth, which looked like the souls of the trees, that had been out wandering all night, and had been overtaken by the sun ere they could re-enter their dark cells. Every motion of the horses under them was like a throb of the heart of the earth, every bound like a sigh of her bliss. Florimel shouted almost like a boy with ecstasy, and Clementina's moonlight went very near changing into sunlight as she gazed, and breathed, and knew that she was alive.

They started without Malcolm, for he must always put his mistress up, and then go back to the stable for Kelpie. In a moment they were in the wood, crossing its shadows. It was like swimming their horses through a sea of shadows. Then came a little stream and the horses splashed it about like children from very gamesomeness. Half a mile more and there was a saw-mill, with a mossy wheel, a pond behind, dappled with sun and shade, a dark rush of water along a brown trough, and the air full of the sweet smell of sawn wood. Clementina had not once looked behind, and did not know whether Malcolm had yet joined them or not. All at once the wild vitality of Kelpie filled the space beside her, and the voice of Malcolm was in her ears. She turned her head. He was looking very solemn.

"Will you let me tell you, my lady, what this always makes me think of?" he said.

"What in particular do you mean?" returned Clementina coldly.

"This smell of new-sawn wood that fills the air, my lady."

She bowed her head.

"It makes me think of Jesus in his father's workshop," said Malcolm "—how he must have smelled the same sweet scent of the trees of the world broken for the uses of men, that is now so sweet to me. Oh, my lady! it makes the earth very holy and very lovely to think that as we are in the world, so was he in the world. Oh, my lady! think:—if God should be so nearly one with us that it was nothing strange to him thus to visit his people! that we are not the offspring of the soulless tyranny of law that knows not even its own self, but the children of an unfathomable wonder, of which science gathers only the foambells on the shore—children in the house of a living Father, so entirely our Father that he cares even to death that we should understand and love him!"

He reined Kelpie back, and as she passed on, his eyes caught a glimmer of emotion in Clementina's. He fell behind, and all that day did not come near her again.

Florimel asked her what he had been saying, and she compelled herself to repeat a part of it.

"He is always saying such odd out-of-the-way things!" remarked Florimel. "I used sometimes, like you, to fancy him a little astray, but I soon found I was wrong. I wish you could have heard him tell a story he once told my father and me. It was one of the wildest you ever heard. I can't tell to this day whether he believed it himself or not. He told it quite as if he did."

"Could you not make him tell it again, as we ride along? It would shorten the way."

"Do you want the way shortened?—I don't. But indeed it would not do to tell it so. It ought to be heard just where I heard it—at the foot of the ruined castle where the dreadful things in it took place. You must come and see me at Lossie House in the autumn, and then he shall tell it you. Besides, it ought to be told in Scotch, and there you will soon learn enough to follow it : half the charm depends on that."

Although Malcolm did not again approach Clementina that day, he watched almost her every motion as she rode. Her lithe graceful back and shoulders—for she was a rebel against the fashion of the day in dress as well as in morals, and, believing in the natural stay of the muscles, had found them responsive to her trust— the noble poise of her head, and the motions of her arms, easy yet decided, were ever present to him, though sometimes he could hardly have told whether his sight or his mind—now in the radiance of the sun, now in the shadow of the wood, now against the green of the meadow, now against the blue of the sky, and now in the faint moonlight, through which he followed, as a ghost in the realms of Hades might follow the ever flitting phantom of his love. Day glided after day. Adventure came not near them. Soft and lovely as a dream the morning dawned, the noon flowed past, the evening came and the death that followed was yet sweeter than the life that had gone before. Through it all, day-dream and nightly trance, radiant air and moony mist, before him glode the shape of Clementina, its every motion a charm. After that shape he could have been content, oh, how content! to ride on and on through the ever unfolding vistas of an eternal succession. Occasionally his mistress would call him to her, and then he would have one glance of the day-side of the wondrous world he had been following. Somewhere within it must be the word of the living One. Little he thought that all the time she was thinking more of him who had spoken that word in her hearing. That he was the object of her thoughts not a suspicion crossed the mind of the simple youth. How could he imagine a lady like her taking a fancy to what, for all his marquisate, he was still in his own eyes, a raw young fisherman, only just learning how to behave himself decently! No doubt, ever since she began to listen to reason, the idea of her had been spreading like a sweet odour in his heart, but not because she had listened to *him*. The very fulness of his admiration had made him wrathful with the intellectual dishonesty, for in her it could not be stupidity, that quenched his worship, and the first dawning sign of a *reasonable* soul drew him to her feet, where, like Pygmalion before his statue, he could have poured out his heart in thanks, that she consented to be a woman. But even the intellectual phantom, nay, even the very phrase of being in love with her, had never risen upon the dimmest verge of his consciousness—and that although her being had now become to him of all but absorbing interest. I say *all but*, because Malcolm knew something of One whose idea she was, who had uttered her from the immortal depths of his imagination. The man to whom no window into the treasures of the Godhead has yet been opened, may well scoff at the notion of such a love, for he has this advantage, that, while one like Malcolm can never cease to love, he, gifted being, can love to-day and forget to-morrow—or next year—where is the difference? Malcolm's main thought was—what a grand thing it would be to rouse a woman like Clementina to lift her head into the

> regions mild of calm and serene air,
> Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
> Which men call Earth.

If anyone think that love has no right to talk religion, I answer for Malcolm at least, asking, Whereof shall a man speak, if not out of the abundance of his heart? That man knows little either of love or of religion who imagines they ought to be kept apart. Of what sort, I ask, is either, if unfit to approach the other? Has God decreed, created a love that must separate from himself? Is Love then divided? Or shall not love to the heart created, lift up the heart to the Heart creating? Alas for the love that is not treasured in heaven! for the moth and the rust will devour it. Ah, these pitiful old moth-eaten loves!

All the journey then Malcolm was thinking how to urge the beautiful lady into finding for herself whether she had a father in heaven or not. A pupil of Mr Graham, he placed little value in argument that ran in any groove but that of persuasion, or any value in persuasion that had any end but action.

On the second day of the journey, he rode up to his mistress, and told her, taking care that Lady Clementina should hear, that Mr Graham was now preaching in London, adding that for his part he had never before heard anything fit to call preaching. Florimel did not show much interest, but asked where, and Malcolm fancied he could see Lady Clementina make a mental note of the place.

"If only," he thought, "she would let the power of that man's faith have a chance of influencing her, all would be well."

The ladies talked a good deal, but Florimel was not in earnest about anything, and for Clementina to have turned the conversation upon those possibilities, dim-dawning through the chaos of her world, which had begun to interest her, would have been absurd—especially since such was her confusion and uncertainty, that she could not tell whether they were clouds or mountains, shadows or continents. Besides, why give a child sovereigns to play with when counters or dominoes would do as well? Clementina's thoughts could not have passed into Florimel, and become her thoughts. Their hearts, their natures must come nearer first. Advise Florimel to disregard rank, and marry the man she loved! As well counsel the child to give away the cake he would cry for with intensified selfishness the moment he had parted with it! Still, there was that in her feeling for Malcolm which rendered her doubtful in Florimel's presence.

Between the grooms little passed. Griffith's contempt for Malcolm found its least offensive expression in silence, its most offensive in the shape of his countenance. He could not make him the simplest reply without a sneer. Malcolm was driven to keep mostly behind. If by any chance he got in front of his fellow-groom, Griffith would instantly cross his direction and ride between him and the ladies. His look seemed to say he had to protect them.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### PORTLAND PLACE.

THE latter part of the journey was not so pleasant: it rained. It was not cold, however, and the ladies did not mind it much. It accorded with Clementina's mood; and as to Florimel, but for the thought of meeting Caley, her fine spirits would have laughed the weather to scorn. Malcolm was merry. His spirits always rose at the appearance of bad weather, as indeed with every show of misfortune a response antagonistic invariably awoke in him. On the present occasion he had even to repress the constantly recurring impulse to break out in song. His bosom's lord sat lightly in his throne. Griffith was the only miserable one of the party. He was tired, and did not relish the thought of the work to be done before getting home. They entered London in a wet fog, streaked with rain, and dyed with smoke. Florimel went with Clementina for the night, and Malcolm carried a note from her to Lady Bellair, after which, having made Kelpie comfortable, he went to his lodgings.

When he entered the curiosity-shop, the woman received him with evident surprise, and when he would have passed through to the stair, stopped him with the unwelcome information that, finding he did not return, and knowing nothing about himself or his occupation, she had, as soon as the week for which he had paid in advance was out, let the room to an old lady from the country.

"It is no great matter to me," said Malcolm, thoughtful over the woman's want of confidence in him, for he had rather liked her, "only I am sorry you could not trust me a little."

"It's all you know, young man," she returned. "People as lives in London must take care of theirselves—not wait for other people to do it. They'd soon find theirselves nowheres in partic'lar. I've took care on your things, an' laid 'em all together, an' the sooner you find another place for 'em the better, for they do take up a deal o' room."

His personal property was not so bulky, however, but that in ten minutes he had it all in his carpet-bag and a paper parcel, carrying which he re-entered the shop.

"Would you oblige me by allowing these to lie here till I come for them?" he said.

The woman was silent for a moment.

"I'd rather see the last on 'em," she answered. "To tell the truth, I don't like the look on 'em. You acts a part, young man. I'm on the square myself. But you'll find plenty to take you in. —No, I can't do it. Take 'em with you."

Malcolm turned from her, and with his bag in one hand and the parcel under the other arm, stepped from the shop into the dreary night. There he stood in the drizzle. It was a by-street into which gas had not yet penetrated, and the oil lamps shone red and dull through the fog. He concluded to leave the things with Merton, while he went to find a lodging.

Merton was a decent sort of fellow—*not* in his master's confidence, and Malcolm found him quite as sympathetic as the small occasion demanded.

"It ain't no sort o' night," he said, "to go lookin' for a bed. Let's go an' speak to my old woman: she's a oner at contrivin'."

He lived over the stable, and they had but to go up the stair. Mrs Merton sat by the fire. A cradle with a baby was in front of it. On the other side sat Caley, in suppressed exultation, for here came what she had been waiting for—the first fruits of certain arrangements between her and Mrs Catanach. She greeted Malcolm distantly, but neither disdainfully nor spitefully.

"I trust you've brought me back my lady, MacPhail," she said; then added, thawing into something like jocularity, "I shouldn't have looked to you to go running away with her."

"I left my lady at Lady Clementina Thornicroft's an hour ago," answered Malcolm.

"Oh, of course! Lady Clem's everything now."

"I believe my lady's not coming home till to-morrow," said Malcolm.

"All the better for us," returned Caley. "Her room ain't ready for her.—But I didn't know you lodged with Mrs Merton, MacPhail," she said, with a look at the luggage he had placed on the floor.

"Lawks, miss!" cried the good woman, "wherever should we put him up, as has but the next room?"

"You'll have to find that out, mother," said Merton. "Sure you've got enough to shake down for him! With a truss of straw to help, you'll manage it somehow—eh, old lady?—I'll be bound!" And with that he told Malcolm's condition.

"Well, I suppose we must manage it somehow," answered his wife, "but I'm afraid we can't make him over-comfortable."

"I don't see but we *could* take him in at the house," said Caley, reflectively. "There is a small room empty in the garret, I know. It ain't much more than a closet, to be sure, but if he could put up with it for a night or two, just till he found a better, I would run across and see what they say."

Malcolm wondered at the change in her, but could not hesitate. The least chance of getting settled in the house was a thing not to be thrown away. He thanked her heartily. She rose and went, and they sat and talked till her return. She had been delayed, she said, by the housekeeper; "the cross old patch" had objected to taking in anyone from the stables.

"I'm sure," she went on, "there ain't the ghost of a reason why you shouldn't have the room, except that it ain't good enough. Nobody else wants it, or is likely to. But it's all right now, and if you'll come across in about an hour, you'll find it ready for you. One of the girls in the kitchen—I forget her name—offered to make it tidy for you. Only take care—I give you warning: she's a great admirer of Mr MacPhail."

Therewith she took her departure, and at the appointed time Malcolm followed her. The door was opened to him by one of the maids whom he knew by sight, and in her guidance he soon found himself in that part of a house he liked best—immediately under the roof. The room was indeed little more than a closet in the slope of the roof, with only a sky-light. But just outside the door was a storm-window, from which, over the top of a lower range of houses, he had a glimpse of the mews-yard. The place smelt rather badly of mice, while, as the sky-light was immediately above his bed, and he had no fancy for drenching that with an infusion of soot, he could not open it. These, however, were the sole faults he had to find with the place. Everything looked nice and clean, and his education had not tended to fastidiousness. He took a book from his bag, and read a good while; then went to bed, and fell fast asleep.

In the morning he woke early, as was his habit, sprang at once on the floor, dressed, and went quietly down. The household was yet motionless. He had begun to descend the last stair, when all at once he turned deadly sick, and had to sit down, grasping the balusters. In a few minutes he recovered, and made the best speed he could to the stable, where Kelpie was now beginning to demand her breakfast.

But Malcolm had never in his life before felt sick, and it seemed awful to him. Something that had appeared his own, a portion —hardly a portion, rather an essential element of himself, had suddenly deserted him, left him a prey to the inroad of something that was not of himself, bringing with it faintness of heart, fear and dismay. He found himself for the first time in his life trembling; and it was to him a thing as appalling as strange. While he sat on the stair he could not think; but as he walked to the mews he said to himself:

"Am I then the slave of something that is not myself—something to which my fancied freedom and strength are a mockery? Was my courage, my peace, all the time dependent on something not me, which could be separated from me, and but a moment ago was separated from me, and left me as helplessly dismayed as the veriest coward in creation? I wonder what Alexander would have thought if, as he swung himself on Bucephalus, he had been taken as I was on the stair."

Afterwards, talking the thing over with Mr Graham, he said:

"I saw that I had no hand in my own courage. If I had any courage, it was simply that I was born with it. If it left me, I could not help it: I could neither prevent nor recall it; I could only wait until it returned. Why, then, I asked myself, should I feel ashamed that, for five minutes, as I sat on the stair, Kelpie was a terror to me, and I felt as if I dared not go near her? I had almost reached the stable before I saw into it a little. Then I did see that if I had had nothing to do with my own courage, it was quite time I had something to do with it. If a man had no hand in his own nature, character, being, what could he be better than a divine puppet—a happy creature, possibly—a heavenly animal, like the grand horses and lions of the book of the Revelation—but not one of the gods that the sons of God, the partakers of the divine nature, are? For this end came the breach in my natural courage—that I might repair it from the will and power God had given me, that I might have a hand in the making of my own courage, in the creating of myself. Therefore I must see to it."

Nor had he to wait for his next lesson, namely, the opportunity of doing what he had been taught in the first. For just as he reached the stable, where he heard Kelpie clamouring with hoofs and teeth, after her usual manner when she judged herself neglected, the sickness returned, and with it such a fear of the animal he heard thundering and clashing on the other side of the door, as amounted to nothing less than horror. She was a man-eating horse!—a creature with bloody teeth, brain-spattered hoofs, and eyes of hate! A flesh-loving devil had possessed her, and was now crying out for her groom that he might devour him.

He gathered, with agonized effort, every power within him to an awful council, and thus he said to himself:

"Better a thousand times my brain plastered the stable-wall than I should hold them in the head of a dastard. How can God look at me with any content if I quail in the face of his four-footed creature! Does he not demand of me action according to what I *know*, not what I may chance at any moment to *feel?* God is my strength, and I will lay hold of that strength and use it, or I have none, and Kelpie may take me and welcome."

Therewith the sickness abated so far that he was able to open the stable-door; and, having brought them once into the presence of their terror, his will arose and lorded it over his shrinking quivering nerves, and like slaves they obeyed him. Surely the Father of his spirit was most in that will when most that will was Malcolm's own! It is when a man is most a man, that the cause of the man, the God of his life, the very Life himself, the original life-creating Life, is closest to him, is most within him. The individual, that his individuality may blossom, and not soon be "massed into the common clay," must have the vital indwelling of the primary Individuality which is its origin. The fire that is the hidden life of the bush will not consume it.

Malcolm tottered to the corn-bin, staggered up to Kelpie, fell up against her hind quarters as they dropped from a great kick, but got into the stall beside her. She turned eagerly, darted at her food, swallowed it greedily, and was quiet as a lamb while he dressed her.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### PORTLOSSIE AND SCAURNOSE.

Meantime things were going rather badly at Portlossie and Scaurnose; and the factor was the devil of them. Those who had known him longest said he must be *fey*, that is *doomed*, so strangely altered was his behaviour. Others said he took more counsel with his bottle than had been his wont, and got no good from it. Almost all the fishers found him surly, and upon some he broke out in violent rage, while to certain whom he regarded as Malcolm's special friends, he carried himself with cruel oppression. The notice to leave at midsummer clouded the destiny of Joseph Mair and his family, and every householder in the two villages believed that to take them in would be to call down the like fate upon himself. But Meg Partan at least was not to be intimidated. Her outbursts of temper were but the hurricanes of a tropical heart—not much the less true and good and steadfast that it was fierce. Let the factor rage as he would, Meg was absolute in her determination that, if the cruel sentence was carried out, which she hardly expected, her house should be the shelter of those who had received her daughter when her severity had driven her from her home. That would leave her own family and theirs three months to look out for another abode. Certain of Blue Peter's friends ventured a visit of intercession to the factor, and were received with composure and treated with consideration until their object appeared, when his wrath burst forth so wildly that they were glad to escape without having to defend their persons: only the day before had he learned with certainty from Miss Horn that Malcolm was still in the service of the marchioness, and in constant attendance upon her when she rode. It almost maddened him. He had for some time taken to drinking more toddy after his dinner, and it was fast ruining his temper: his wife, who had from the first excited his indignation against Malcolm, was now reaping her reward. To complete the troubles of the fisher-folk, the harbour at Portlossie had, by a severe equinoctial storm, been so filled with sand as to be now inaccessible at lower than half tide, nobody as yet having made it his business to see it attended to.

But, in the midst of his anxieties about Florimel and his interest in Clementina, Malcolm had not been forgetting them. As soon as he was a little settled in London, he had written to Mr Soutar, and he to architects and contractors, on the subject of a harbour at Scaurnose. But there were difficulties, and the matter had been making but slow progress. Malcolm, however, had insisted, and in consequence of his determination to have the possibilities of the thing thoroughly understood, three men appeared one morning on the rocks at the bottom of the cliff on the west side of the Nose. The children of the village discovered them, and carried the news; whereupon, the men being all out in the bay, the women left their work and went to see what the strangers were about. The moment they were satisfied that they could make nothing of their proceedings, they naturally became suspicious. To whom the fancy first occurred, nobody ever knew, but such was the unhealthiness of the moral atmosphere of the place, caused by the injustice and severity of Mr Crathie, that, once suggested, it was universally received that they were sent by the factor —and that for a purpose only too consistent with the treatment Scaurnose, they said, had invariably received ever since first it was the dwelling of fishers! Had not their fathers told them how unwelcome they were to the lords of the land? And what rents had they not to pay! and how poor was the shelter for which they paid so much—without a foot of land to grow a potato in! To crown all, the factor was at length about to drive them in a body from the place—Blue Peter first, one of the best as well as the most considerable men among them! His notice to quit was but the beginning of a clearance. It was easy to see what those villains were about—on that precious rock, their only friend, the one that did its best to give them the sole shadow of harbourage they had, cutting off the wind from the north-east a little, and breaking the eddy round the point of the Nose! What *could* they be about but marking the spots where to bore the holes for the blasting-powder that should scatter it to the winds, and let death and destruction, and the wild sea howling in upon Scaurnose, that the cormorant and the bittern might possess it, the owl and the raven dwell in it? But it would be seen what their husbands and fathers would say to it when they came home! In the meantime they must themselves do what they could. What were they men's wives for, if not to act for their husbands when they happened to be away?

The result was a shower of stones upon the unsuspecting surveyors, who forthwith fled, and carried the report of their reception to Mr Soutar at Duff Harbour. He wrote to Mr Crathie, who till then had heard nothing of the business; and the news increased both his discontent with his superiors, and his wrath with those whom he had come to regard as his rebellious subjects. The stiff-necked people of the Bible was to him always now, as often he heard the words, the people of Scaurnose and the Seaton of Portlossie. And having at length committed this overt outrage, would he not be justified by all in taking more active measures against them?

When the fishermen came home and heard how their women had conducted themselves, they accepted their conjectures, and approved of their defence of the settlement. It was well for the land-loupers, they said, that they had only the women to deal with.

Blue Peter did not so soon hear of the affair as the rest, for his Annie had not been one of the assailants. But when the hurried retreat of the surveyors was described to him in somewhat graphic language by one of those concerned in causing it, he struck his clenched fist in the palm of his other hand, and cried,

"Weel saired! There! that's what comes o' yer new——"

He had all but broken his promise, as he had already broken his faith to Malcolm, when his wife laid her hand on his mouth and stopped the issuing word. He started with sudden conviction and stood for a moment in absolute terror at sight of the precipice down which he had been on the point of falling, then straightway excusing himself to his conscience on the ground of non-intent, was instantly angrier with Malcolm than before. He could not reflect that the disregarded cause of the threatened sin was the greater sin of the two. The breach of that charity which thinketh no evil may be a graver fault than a hasty breach of promise.

Peter had not been improving since his return from London. He found less satisfaction in his *religious exercises;* was not unfrequently clouded in temper, occasionally even to sullenness; referred things oftener than formerly to the vileness of the human nature, but was far less willing than before to allow that he might himself be wrong; while somehow the Bible had no more the same plenitude of relation to the wants of his being, and he rose from the reading of it unrefreshed. Men asked each other what had come to Blue Peter, but no one could answer the question. For himself, he attributed the change, which he could not but recognise, although he did not understand it, to the withdrawing of the spirit of God, in displeasure that he had not merely allowed himself to be inveigled into a playhouse, but, far worse, had enjoyed the wickedness he saw there. When his wife reasoned that God knew he had gone in ignorance, trusting his friend, he cried,

"What 's that to him wha judges richteous judgment? What's a' oor puir meeserable excuzes i' the een 'at can see throu' the wa's o' the hert! Ignorance is no innocence."

Thus he lied for God, pleading his cause on the principles of hell. But the eye of his wife was single, and her body full of light; therefore to her it was plain that neither the theatre nor his conscience concerning it was the cause of the change: it had to do with his feelings towards Malcolm. He wronged his friend in his heart, half knew it, but would not own it. Fearing to search himself, he took refuge in resentment, and to support his hard judgment, put false and cruel interpretations on whatever befell. So that, with love and anger and wrong acknowledged, his heart was full of bitterness.

"It 's a' the drumblet (*muddied, troubled*) luve o' 'im!" said Annie to herself, "Puir fallow! gien only Ma'colm wad come hame, an' lat him ken he 's no the villain he taks him for. I'll no believe mysel' 'at the laad I kissed like my ain mither's son afore he gaed awa' wad turn like that upo' 's 'maist the meenute he was oot o' sicht, an' a' for a feow words aboot a fulish play-actin'. Lord bliss us a'! markises is men!"

"We'll see, Peter, my man," she said, when the neighbour took her leave, "whether the wife, though she hasna' been to the ill place, an' that's surely Lon'on, canna tell the true frae the fause full better nor her man, 'at kens sae muckle mair nor she wants to ken? Lat sit an' lat see."

Blue Peter made no reply; but perhaps the deepest depth in his fall was that he *feared* his wife might be right, and he have one day to stand ashamed before both her and his friend. But there are marvellous differences in the *quality* of the sins of different men, and a noble nature like Peter's would have to sink far indeed to be beyond redemption. Still there was one element mingling with his wrongness whose very triviality increased the difficulty of long-delaying repentance: he had been not a little proud at finding himself the friend of a marquis. From the first they had been friends, when the one was a youth and the other a child, and had been out together in many a stormy and dangerous sea. More than once or twice, driven from the churlish ocean to the scarce less inhospitable shore, they had lain all night in each other's arms to keep the life awake within their frozen garments. And now this marquis spoke English to him! It rankled!

All the time Blue Peter was careful to say nothing to injure Malcolm in the eyes of his former comrades. His manner when his name was mentioned, however, he could not honestly school to the conveyance of the impression that things were as they had been betwixt them. Folk marked the difference, and it went to swell the general feeling that Malcolm had done ill to forsake a sea-faring life for one upon which all fishermen must look down with contempt. Some in the Seaton went so far in their enmity as even to hint at an explanation of his conduct in the truth of the discarded scandal which had laid Lizzy's child at his door.

But amongst them was one who, having wronged him thus, and been convinced of her error, was now so fiercely his partisan as to be ready to wrong the whole town in his defence: that was Meg Partan, properly Mistress Findlay, Lizzy's mother. Although the daughter had never confessed, the mother had yet arrived at the right conclusion concerning the father of her child—how, she could hardly herself have told, for the conviction had grown by accretion; a sign here and a sign there, impalpable save to maternal sense, had led her to the truth; and now, if anyone had a word to say against Malcolm, he had better not say it in the hearing of the Partaness.

One day Blue Peter was walking home from the upper town of Portlossie, not with the lazy gait of the fisherman off work, poised backwards, with hands in trouser-pocket, but stooping care-laden with listless-swinging arms. Thus Meg Partan met him—and of course attributed his dejection to the factor.

"Deil ha'e 'im for an upsettin' rascal 'at hasna pride eneuch to haud him ohn lickit the gentry's shune! The man maun be fey! I houp he may, an' I wuss I saw the beerial o' 'im makin' for the kirkyaird. It's nae ill to wuss weel to a' body 'at wad be left! His nose is turnt twise the colour i' the last twa month. He'll be drinkin' byous. Gien only Ma'colm MacPhail had been at hame to haud him in order!"

Peter said nothing, and his silence, to one who spake out whatever came, seemed fuller of restraints and meanings than it was. She challenged it at once.

"Noo, what mean ye by sayin' naething, Peter? Guid kens it's the warst thing man or woman can say o' onybody to haud their tongue. It's a thing I never was blamed wi' mysel', an' I wadna du't."

"That's verra true," said Peter.

"The mair weicht's intill't whan I lay 't to the door o' anither," persisted Meg. "Peter, gien ye ha'e onything again' my freen' Ma'colm MacPhail, oot wi' 't like a man, an' no playac' the gunpoother-plot ower again. Ill wull's the warst poother ye can lay i' the boddom o' ony man's boat. But say 'at ye like, I s' uphaud Ma'colm again' the haill poustie o' ye. Gien he was but here! I say t again, honest laad!"

But she could not rouse Peter to utterance, and losing what little temper she had, she rated him soundly, and sent him home saying with the prophet Jonah, "Do I not well to be angry?"

for that also he placed to Malcolm's account. Nor was his home any more a harbour for his riven boat, seeing his wife only longed for the return of him with whom his spirit chode: she regarded him as an exiled king, one day to reappear, and justify himself in the eyes of all, friends and enemies.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### TORTURE.

THOUGH unable to eat any breakfast, Malcolm persuaded himself that he felt nearly as well as usual when he went to receive his mistress's orders. Florimel had had enough of horseback—for several days to come indeed—and would not ride. So he saddled Kelpie, and rode to Chelsea to look after his boat. To get rid of the mare, he rang the stable-bell at Mr Lenorme's, and the gardener let him in. As he was putting her up, the man told him that the housekeeper had heard from his master. Malcolm went to the house to learn what he might, and found to his surprise that, if he had gone on the continent, he was there no longer, for the letter, which contained only directions concerning some of his pictures, was dated from Newcastle, and bore the Durham postmark of a week ago. Malcolm remembered that he had heard Lenorme speak of Durham cathedral, and in the hope that he might be spending some time there, begged the housekeeper to allow him to go to the study to write to her master. When he entered, however, he saw something that made him change his plan, and, having written, instead of sending the letter, as he had intended, inclosed to the postmaster at Durham, he left it upon an easel. It contained merely an earnest entreaty to be made and kept acquainted with his movements, that he might at once let him know if anything should occur that he ought to be informed concerning.

He found all on board the yacht in ship-shape, only Davy was absent. Travers explained that he sent him on shore for a few hours every day. He was a sharp boy, he said, and the more he saw, the more useful he would be, and as he never gave him any money, there was no risk of his mistaking his hours.

"When do you expect him?" asked Malcolm.

'At four o'clock," answered Travers.

"It is four now," said Malcolm.

A shrill whistle came from the Chelsea shore.

"And there's Davy," said Travers.

Malcolm got into the dinghy and rowed ashore.

"Davy," he said, "I don't want you to be all day on board, but I can't have you be longer away than an hour at a time,"

"Ay, ay, sir," said Davy.

"Now attend to me."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Do you know Lady Lossie's house?"

"No, sir; but I ken hersel'."

"How is that?"

"I ha'e seen her mair nor twa or three times, ridin' wi' yersel', to yon hoose yon'er."

"Would you know her again?"

"Ay wad I—fine that. What for no, sir."

"It's a good way to see a lady across the Thames and know her again."

"Ow! but I tuik the spy-glaiss till her," answered Davy, reddening.

"You are sure of her, then?"

"I *am* that, sir."

"Then come with me, and I will show you where she lives. I will not ride faster than you can run. But mind you don't look as if you belonged to me."

"Na, na, sir. There's fowk takin' nottice."

"What do you mean by that?"

"There's a wee laddie been efter mysel' twise or thrice."

"Did you do anything?"

"He wasna big eneuch to lick, sae I jist got him the last time an' pu'd his niz, an' I dinna think he'll come efter me again."

To see what the boy could do, Malcolm let Kelpie go at a good trot: but Davy kept up without effort, now shooting ahead, now falling behind, now stopping to look in at a window, and now to cast a glance at a game of pitch and toss. No mere passer-by could have suspected that the sailor-boy belonged to the horseman. He dropped him not far from Portland Place, telling him to go and look at the number, but not stare at the house.

All the time he had had no return of the sickness, but, although thus actively occupied, had felt greatly depressed. One main cause of this was, however, that he had not found his religion stand him in such stead as he might have hoped. It was not yet what it must be to prove its reality. And now his eyes were afresh opened to see that in his nature and thoughts lay large spaces wherein God ruled not supreme—desert places, where who could tell what might appear? For in such regions wild beasts range, evil herbs flourish, and demons go about. If in very deed he lived and moved and had his being in God, then assuredly there ought not to be one cranny in his nature, one realm of his consciousness, one well-spring of thought, where the will of God was a stranger. If all were as it should be, then surely there would be no moment, looking back on which he could not at least say,

> Yet like some sweet beguiling melody,
> So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
> Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,
> Yea, with my life and life's own secret joy.

"In that agony o' sickness, as I sat upo' the stair," he said to himself, for still in his own thoughts he spoke his native tongue, "whaur was my God in a' my thouchts? I did cry till 'im, I min' weel, but it was my reelin' brain an' no my trustin' hert 'at cried. Aih me! I doobt gien the Lord war to come to me noo, he wadna fin' muckle faith i' my pairt o' the yerth. Aih! I wad like to lat him see something like lippenin'! I wad fain trust him till his hert's content. But I doobt it's only speeritual ambeetion, or better wad hae come o' 't by this time. Gien that sickness come again, I maun see, noo 'at I'm forewarned o' my ain wakeness, what I can du. It maun be something better nor last time, or I'll tine hert a'thegither. Weel, maybe I need to be heumblet. The Lord help me!"

In the evening he went to the schoolmaster, and gave him a pretty full account of where he had been and what had taken place since last he saw him, dwelling chiefly on his endeavours with Lady Clementina.

From Mr Graham's lodging to the north-eastern gate of the Regent's Park, the nearest way led through a certain passage, which, although a thoroughfare to persons on foot, was little known. Malcolm had early discovered it, and always used it. Part of this short cut was the yard and back-premises of a small public-house. It was between eleven and twelve as he entered it for the second time that night. Sunk in thought and suspecting no evil, he was struck down from behind, and lost his consciousness. When he came to himself he was lying in the public-house, with his head bound up, and a doctor standing over him, who asked him if he had been robbed. He searched his pockets, and found that his old watch was gone, but his money left. One of the men standing about said he would see him home. He half thought he had seen him before, and did not like the look of him, but accepted the offer, hoping to get on the track of something thereby. As soon as they entered the comparative solitude of the park he begged his companion, who had scarcely spoken all the way, to give him his arm, and leaned upon it as if still suffering, but watched him closely. About the middle of the park, where not a creature was in sight, he felt him begin to fumble in his coat-pocket, and draw something from it. But when, unresisted, he snatched away his other arm, Malcolm's fist followed it, and the man fell, nor made any resistance while he took from him a short stick, loaded with lead, and his own watch, which he found in his waistcoat-pocket. Then the fellow rose with apparent difficulty, but the moment he was on his legs, ran like a hare, and Malcolm let him run, for he felt unable to follow him.

As soon as he reached home, he went to bed, for his head ached severely; but he slept pretty well, and in the morning flattered himself he felt much as usual. But it was as if all the night that horrible sickness had been lying in wait on the stair to spring upon him, for, the moment he reached the same spot on his way down, he almost fainted. It was worse than before. His very soul seemed to turn sick. But although his heart died within him, somehow, in the confusion of thought and feeling occasioned by intense suffering, it seemed while he clung to the balusters as if with both hands he were clinging to the skirts of God's garment; and through the black smoke of his fainting, his soul seemed to be struggling up towards the light of his being. Presently the horrible sense subsided as before, and again he sought to descend the stair and go to Kelpie. But immediately the sickness returned, and all he could do after a long and vain struggle, was to crawl on hands and knees up the stairs and back to his room. There he crept upon his bed, and was feebly committing Kelpie to the care of her maker, when consciousness forsook him.

It returned, heralded by frightful pains all over his body, which by and by subsiding, he sank again to the bottom of the black Lethe.

Meantime Kelpie had got so wildly uproarious that Merton tossed her half a truss of hay, which she attacked like an enemy, and ran to the house to get somebody to call Malcolm. After what seemed endless delay, the door was opened by his admirer, the scullery-maid, who, as soon as she heard what was the matter, hastened to his room.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### THE PHILTRE.

BEFORE he again came to himself, Malcolm had a dream, which, although very confused, was in parts more vivid than any he had ever had. His surroundings in it were those in which he actually lay, and he was ill, but he thought it the one illness he had before. His head ached, and he could rest in no position he tried. Suddenly he heard a step he knew better than any other approaching the door of his chamber: it opened, and his grandfather in great agitation entered, not following his hands, however, in the fashion usual to blindness, but carrying himself like any sight-gifted man. He went straight to the wash-stand, took up the water-bottle, and with a look of mingled wrath and horror, dashed it on the floor. The same instant a cold shiver ran through the dreamer, and his dream vanished. But instead of waking in his bed, he found himself standing in the middle of the floor, his feet wet, the bottle in shivers about them, and, strangest of all, the neck of the bottle in his hand. He lay down again, grew delirious, and tossed about in the remorseless persecution of centuries. But at length his tormentors left him, and when he came to himself, he knew he was in his right mind.

It was evening, and some one was sitting near his bed. By the light of the long-snuffed tallow candle, he saw the glitter of two great black eyes watching him, and recognised the young woman who had admitted him to the house the night of his return, and whom he had since met once or twice as he came and went. The moment she perceived that he was aware of her presence, she threw herself on her knees at his bedside, hid her face, and began to weep. The sympathy of his nature rendered yet more sensitive by weakness and suffering, Malcolm laid his hand on her head, and sought to comfort her.

"Don't be alarmed about me," he said, "I shall soon be all right again."

"I can't bear it," she sobbed. "I can't bear to see you like that, and all my fault."

"*Your* fault! What *can* you mean?" said Malcolm.

"But I did go for the doctor, for all it may be the hanging of me," she sobbed. "Miss Caley said I wasn't to, but I would and I did. They can't say I meant it—can they?"

"I don't understand," said Malcolm, feebly.

"The doctor says somebody's been an' p'isoned you," said the girl, with a cry that sounded like a mingled sob and howl; "an' he's been a-pokin' of all sorts of things down your poor throat."

And again she cried aloud in her agony.

"Well, never mind; I'm not dead you see; and I'll take better care of myself after this. Thank you for being so good to me; you've saved my life."

"Ah! you won't be so kind to me when you know all, Mr MacPhail," sobbed the girl. "It was myself gave you the horrid stuff, but God knows I didn't mean to do you no harm no more than your own mother."

"What made you do it then?" asked Malcolm.

"The witch-woman told me to. She said that—that—if I gave it you—you would—you would——"

She buried her face in the bed, and so stifled a fresh howl of pain and shame.

"And it was all lies—lies!" she resumed, lifting her face again, which now flashed with rage, "for I know you'll hate me worse than ever now."

"My poor girl, I never hated you," said Malcolm.

"No, but you did as bad: you never looked at me. And now you'll hate me out and out. And the doctor says if you die, he'll have it all searched into, and Miss Caley she look at me as if she suspect me of a hand in it; and they won't let alone till they've got me hanged for it; and it's all along of love of you; and I tell you the truth, Mr MacPhail, and you can do anything with me you like—I don't care—only you won't let them hang me—will you?—Oh, please don't."

She said all this with clasped hands, and the tears streaming down her face.

Malcolm's impulse was of course to draw her to him and comfort her, but something warned him.

"Well, you see I'm not going to die just yet," he said as merrily as he could; "and if I find myself going, I shall take care the blame falls on the right person. What was the witch-woman like? Sit down on the chair there, and tell me all about her."

She obeyed with a sigh, and gave him such a description as he could not mistake. He asked where she lived, but the girl had never met her anywhere but in the street, she said.

Questioning her very carefully as to Caley's behaviour to her, Malcolm was convinced that she had a hand in the affair. Indeed, she had happily more to do with it than even Mrs Catanach knew, for she had traversed her treatment to the advantage of Malcolm. The mid-wife had meant the potion to work slowly, but the lady's-maid had added to the pretended philtre a certain ingredient in whose efficacy she had reason to trust; and the combination, while it wrought more rapidly, had yet apparently set up a counteraction favourable to the efforts of the struggling vitality which it stung to an agonised resistance.

But Malcolm's strength was now exhausted. He turned faint, and the girl had the sense to run to the kitchen and get him some soup. As he took it, her demeanour and regards made him anxious, uncomfortable, embarrassed. It is to any true man a hateful thing to repel a woman—it is such a reflection upon her.

"I've told you everything, Mr MacPhail, and it's gospel truth I've told you," said the girl, after a long pause.—It was a relief when first she spoke, but the comfort vanished as she went on, and with slow, perhaps unconscious movements approached him. —"I would have died for you, and here that devil of a woman has been making me kill you! Oh, how I hate her! Now you will never love me a bit—not one tiny little bit for ever and ever!"

There was a tone of despairful entreaty in her words that touched Malcolm deeply.

"I am more indebted to you than I can speak or you imagine," he said. "You have saved me from my worst enemy. Do not tell any other what you have told me, or let anyone know that we have talked together. The day will come when I shall be able to show you my gratitude."

Something in his tone struck her, even through the folds of her passion. She looked at him a little amazed, and for a moment the tide ebbed. Then came a rush that overmastered her. She flung her hands above her head, and cried,

"That means you will do anything but love me!"

"I cannot love you as you mean," said Malcolm. "I promise to be your friend, but more is out of my power."

A fierce light came into the girl's eyes. But that instant a terrible cry, such as Malcolm had never heard, but which he knew must be Kelpie's, rang through the air, followed by the shouts of men, the tones of fierce execration, and the clash and clang of hoofs.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, and forgetting everything else, sprang from the bed, and ran to the window outside his door.

The light of their lanterns dimly showed a confused crowd in the yard of the mews, and amidst the hellish uproar of their coarse voices he could hear Kelpie plunging and kicking. Again she uttered the same ringing scream. He threw the window open and cried to her that he was coming, but the noise was far too great for his enfeebled voice. Hurriedly he added a garment or two to his half-dress, rushed to the stair, passing his new friend, who watched anxiously at the head of it, without seeing her, and shot from the house.

## CHAPTER L.

### THE DEMONESS AT BAY.

When he reached the yard of the mews, the uproar had nothing abated. But when he cried out to Kelpie, through it all came a whinny of appeal, instantly followed by a scream. When he got up to the lanterns, he found a group of wrathful men with stable-forks surrounding the poor animal, from whom the blood was streaming before and behind. Fierce as she was, she dared not move, but stood trembling, with the sweat of terror pouring from her. Yet her eye showed that not even terror had cowed her. She was but biding her time. Her master's first impulse was to scatter the men right and left, but on second thoughts, of which he was even then capable, he saw that they might have been driven to apparent brutality in defence of their lives, and besides he could not tell what Kelpie might do if suddenly released. So he caught her by the broken halter, and told them to fall back. They did so carefully—it seemed unwillingly. But the mare had eyes and ears only for her master. What she had never done before, she nosed him over face and shoulders, trembling all the time. Suddenly one of her tormentors darted forward, and gave her a terrible prod in the off hind quarter. But he paid dearly for it. Ere he could draw back, she lashed out, and shot him half across the yard with his knee-joint broken. The whole set of them rushed at her.

"Leave her alone," shouted Malcolm, "or I will take her part. Between us we'll do for a dozen of you."

"The devil's in her," said one of them.

"You'll find more of him in that rascal groaning yonder. You had better see to him. He'll never do such a thing again, I fancy. Where is Merton?"

They drew off and went to help their comrade, who lay senseless.

When Malcolm would have led Kelpie in, she stopped suddenly at the stable-door, and started back shuddering, as if the memory of what she had endured there overcame her. Every fibre of her trembled. He saw that she must have been pitifully used before she broke loose and got out. But she yielded to his coaxing, and he led her to her stall without difficulty. He wished Lady Clementina herself could have been his witness how she knew her friend and trusted him. Had she seen how the poor bleeding thing rejoiced over him, she could not have doubted that his treatment had been in part at least a success.

Kelpie had many enemies amongst the men of the mews. Merton had gone out for the evening, and they had taken the opportunity of getting into her stable and tormenting her. At length she broke her fastenings; they fled, and she rushed out after them.

They carried the maimed man to the hospital, where his leg was immediately amputated.

Malcolm washed and dried his poor animal, handling her as gently as possible, for she was in a sad plight. It was plain he must not have her here any longer: worse to her at least was sure to follow. He went up, trembling himself now, to Mrs Merton. She told him she was just running to fetch him when he arrived: she had no idea how ill he was. But he felt all the better for the excitement, and after he had taken a cup of strong tea, wrote to Mr Soutar to provide men on whom he could depend, if possible the same who had taken her there before, to await Kelpie's arrival at Aberdeen. There he must also find suitable housing and attention for her at any expense until further directions, or until, more probably, he should claim her himself. He added many instructions to be given as to her treatment.

Until Merton returned he kept watch, then went back to the chamber of his torture, which, like Kelpie, he shuddered to enter. The cook let him in, and gave him his candle, but hardly had he closed his door when a tap came to it, and there stood Rose, his preserver. He could not help feeling embarrassed when he saw her.

"I see you don't trust me," she said.

"I do trust you," he answered. "Will you bring me some water. I dare not drink anything that has been standing."

She looked at him with inquiring eyes, nodded her head, and went. When she returned, he drank the water.

"There! you see I trust you," he said with a laugh. "But there are people about who for certain reasons want to get rid of me: will you be on my side?"

"That I will," she answered eagerly.

"I have not got my plans laid yet; but will you meet me somewhere near this to-morrow night? I shall not be at home, perhaps, all day."

She stared at him with great eyes, but agreed at once, and they appointed time and place. He then bade her good night, and the moment she left him lay down on the bed to think. But he did not trouble himself yet to unravel the plot against him, or determine whether the violence he had suffered had the same origin with the poisoning. Nor was the question merely how to continue to serve his sister without danger to his life; for he had just learned what rendered it absolutely imperative that she should be removed from her present position. Mrs Merton had told him that Lady Lossie was about to accompany Lady Bellair and Lord Liftore to the continent. That must not be, whatever means might be necessary to prevent it. Before he went to sleep things had cleared themselves up considerably.

He woke much better, and rose at his usual hour. Kelpie rejoiced him by affording little other sign of the cruelty she had suffered than the angry twitching of her skin when hand or brush approached a wound. The worst fear was that some few white hairs might by and by in consequence fleck her spotless black. Having urgently committed her to Merton's care, he mounted Honour, and rode to the Aberdeen wharf. There to his relief, time growing precious, he learned that the same smack in which Kelpie had come was to sail the next morning for Aberdeen. He arranged at once for her passage, and, before he left, saw to every contrivance he could think of for her safety and comfort. He warned the crew concerning her temper, but at the same time prejudiced them in her favour by the argument of a few sovereigns. He then rode to the Chelsea Reach, where the Psyche had now grown to be a feature of the river in the eyes of the dwellers upon its banks.

At his whistle, Davy tumbled into the dinghy like a round ball over the gunwale, and was rowing for the shore ere his whistle had ceased ringing in Malcolm's own ears. He left him with his horse, went on board, and gave various directions to Travers; then took Davy with him, and bought many things at different shops, which he ordered to be delivered to Davy when he should call for them. Having next instructed him to get everything on board as soon as possible, and appointed to meet him at the same place and hour he had arranged with Rose, he went home.

A little anxious lest Florimel might have wanted him, for it was now past the hour at which he usually waited her orders, he learned to his relief that she was gone shopping with Lady Bellair, upon which he set out for the hospital, whither they had carried the man Kelpie had so terribly mauled. He went, not merely led by sympathy, but urged by a suspicion also which he desired to verify or remove. On the plea of identification, he was permitted to look at him for a moment, but not to speak to him. It was enough: he recognised him at once as the same whose second attack he had foiled in the Regent's Park. He remembered having seen him about the stable, but had never spoken to him. Giving the nurse a sovereign, and Mr Soutar's address, he requested her to let that gentleman know as soon as it was possible to conjecture the time of his leaving. Returning, he gave Merton a hint to keep his eye on the man, and some money to spend for him as he judged best. He then took Kelpie for an airing. To his surprise she fatigued him so much that when he had put her up again he was glad to go and lie down.

When it came near the time for meeting Rose and Davy, he got his things together in the old carpet-bag, which held all he cared for, and carried it with him. As he drew near the spot, he saw Davy already there, keeping a sharp look out on all sides. Presently Rose appeared, but drew back when she saw Davy. Malcolm went to her.

"Rose," he said, "I am going to ask you to do me a great favour. But you cannot except you are able to trust me."

"I do trust you," she answered.

"All I can tell you now is that you must go with that boy to-morrow. Before night you shall know more. Will you do it?"

"I will," answered Rose. "I dearly love a secret."

"I promise to let you understand it, if you do just as I tell you."

"I will."

"Be at this very spot then to-morrow morning, at six o'clock. Come here, Davy. This boy will take you where I shall tell him."

She looked from the one to the other.

"I'll risk it," she said.

"Put on a clean frock, and take a change of linen with you and your dressing things. No harm shall come to you."

"I'm not afraid," she answered, but looked as if she would cry.

"Of course you will not tell anyone."

"I will not, Mr MacPhail."

"You are trusting me a great deal, Rose; but I am trusting you too—more than you think.—Be off with that bag, Davy, and be here at six to-morrow morning, to carry this young woman's for her."

Davy vanished.

"Now, Rose," continued Malcolm, "you had better go and make your preparations."

"Is that all, sir?" she said.

"Yes. I shall see you to-morrow. Be brave."

Something in Malcolm's tone and manner seemed to work strangely on the girl. She gazed up at him half frightened, but submissive, and went at once, looking, however, sadly disappointed.

Malcolm had intended to go and tell Mr Graham of his plans that same night, but he found himself too much exhausted to walk to Camden Town. And thinking over it, he saw that it might be as well if he took the bold measure he contemplated without revealing it to his friend, to whom the knowledge might be the cause of inconvenience. He therefore went home and to bed, that he might be strong for the next day.

## CHAPTER LI.

### THE PSYCHE.

He rose early the next morning, and having fed and dressed Kelpie, strapped her blanket behind her saddle, and, by all the macadamized ways he could find, rode her to the wharf—near where the Thames-tunnel had just been commenced. He had no great difficulty with her on the way, though it was rather nervous work at times. But of late her submission to her master had been decidedly growing. When he reached the wharf, he rode her straight along the gangway on to the deck of the smack, as the easiest if not perhaps the safest way of getting her on board. As soon as she was properly secured, and he had satisfied himself as to the provision they had made for her, impressed upon the captain the necessity of being bountiful to her, and brought a loaf of sugar on board for her use, he left her with a lighter heart than he had had ever since first he fetched her from the same deck.

It was a long way to walk home, but he felt much better, and thought nothing of it. And all the way, to his delight, the wind met him in the face. A steady westerly breeze was blowing. If God makes his angels winds, as the Psalmist says, here was one sent to wait upon him. He reached Portland Place in time to present himself for orders at the usual hour. On these occasions, his mistress not unfrequently saw him herself, but to make sure, he sent up the request that she would speak with him.

"I am sorry to hear that you have been ill, Malcolm," she said kindly, as he entered the room, where happily he found her alone.

"I am quite well now, thank you, my lady," he returned. "I thought your ladyship would like to hear something I happened to come to the knowledge of the other day."

"Yes? What was that?"

"I called at Mr Lenorme's to learn what news there might be of him. The housekeeper let me go up to his painting-room; and what should I see there, my lady, but the portrait of my lord marquis more beautiful than ever, the brown smear all gone, and the likeness, to my mind, greater than before!"

"Then Mr Lenorme is come home!" cried Florimel, scarce attempting to conceal the pleasure his report gave her.

"That I cannot say," said Malcolm. "His housekeeper had a letter from him a few days ago from Newcastle. If he is come back, I do not think she knows it. It seems strange, for who would touch one of his pictures but himself?—except, indeed, he got some friend to set it to rights for your ladyship. Anyhow, I thought you would like to see it again."

"I will go at once," Florimel said, rising hastily. "Get the horses, Malcolm, as fast as you can."

"If my Lord Liftore should come before we start?" he suggested.

"Make haste," returned his mistress, impatiently.

Malcolm did make haste, and so did Florimel. What precisely was in her thoughts who shall say, when she could not have told herself? But doubtless the chance of seeing Lenorme urged her more than the desire to see her father's portrait. Within twenty minutes they were riding down Grosvenor Place, and happily heard no following hoof-beats. When they came near the river, Malcolm rode up to her and said,

"Would your ladyship allow me to put up the horses in Mr Lenorme's stable? I think I could show your ladyship a point or two that may have escaped you."

Florimel thought for a moment, and concluded it would be less awkward, would indeed tend rather to her advantage with Lenorme, should he really be there, to have Malcolm with her.

"Very well," she answered. "I see no objection. I will ride round with you to the stable, and we can go in the back way."

They did so. The gardener took the horses, and they went up to the study. Lenorme was not there, and everything was just as when Malcolm was last in the room. Florimel was much disappointed, but Malcolm talked to her about the portrait, and did all he could to bring back vivid the memory of her father. At length with a little sigh she made a movement to go.

"Has your ladyship ever seen the river from the next room?" said Malcolm, and, as he spoke, threw open the door of communication, near which they stood.

Florimel, who was always ready to *see*, walked straight into the drawing-room, and went to a window.

"There is that yacht lying there still!" remarked Malcolm. "Does she not remind you of the Psyche, my lady?"

"Every boat does that," answered his mistress. "I dream about her. But I couldn't tell her from many another."

"People used to boats, my lady, learn to know them like the faces of their friends.—What a day for a sail!"

"Do you suppose that one is for hire?" said Florimel.

"We can ask," replied Malcolm; and with that went to another window, raised the sash, put his head out, and whistled. Over tumbled Davy into the dinghy at the Psyche's stern, unloosed the painter, and was rowing for the shore ere the minute was out.

"Why, they're answering your whistle already!" said Florimel.

"A whistle goes farther, and perhaps is more imperative than any other call," returned Malcolm evasively, "Will your ladyship come down and hear what they say?"

A wave from the slow-silting lagoon of her girlhood came washing over the sands between, and Florimel flew merrily down the stair and across hall and garden and road to the river-bank, where was a little wooden stage or landing place, with a few steps, at which the dinghy was just arriving.

"Will you take us on board and show us your boat?" said Malcolm.

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Davy.

Without a moment's hesitation, Florimel took Malcolm's offered hand, and stepped into the boat. Malcolm took the oars, and shot the little tub across the river. When they got alongside the cutter, Travers reached down both his hands for hers, and Malcolm held one of his for her foot, and Florimel sprang on deck,

"Young woman on board, Davy?" whispered Malcolm.

"Ay, ay, sir—doon i' the fore," answered Davy, and Malcolm stood by his mistress.

"She *is* like the Psyche," said Florimel, turning to him, "only the mast is not so tall."

"Her topmast is struck, you see my lady—to make sure of her passing clear under the bridges."

"Ask them if we couldn't go down the river a little way," said Florimel. "I should so like to see the houses from it!"

Malcolm conferred a moment with Travers and returned.

"They are quite willing, my lady," he said.

"What fun!" cried Florimel her girlish spirit all at the surface. "How I should like to run away from horrid London altogether, and never hear of it again!—Dear old Lossie House! and the boats! and the fishermen!" she added meditatively.

The anchor was already up, and the yacht drifting with the falling tide. A moment more and she spread a low treble-reefed mainsail behind, a little jib before, and the western breeze filled and swelled and made them alive, and with wind and tide she went swiftly down the smooth stream. Florimel clapped her hands with delight. The shores and all their houses fled up the river. They slid past row-boats, and great heavy barges loaded to the lip, with huge red sails and yellow, glowing and gleaming in the hot sun. For one moment the shadow of Vauxhall Bridge gloomed like a death-cloud, chill and cavernous, over their heads; then out again they shot into the lovely light and heat of the summer world.

"It's well we ain't got to shoot Putney or Battersea," said Travers with a grim smile, as he stood shaping her course by inches with his magic-like steering, in the midst of a little covey of pleasure-boats: "with this wind we might ha' brought either on 'em about our ears like an old barn."

"This *is* life!" cried Florimel, as the river bore them nearer and nearer to the vortex—deeper and deeper into the tumult of London. How solemn the silent yet never resting highway!—almost majestic in the stillness of its hurrying might as it rolled heedless past houses and wharfs that crowded its brinks. They darted through under Westminster Bridge, and boats and barges more and more numerous covered the stream. Waterloo Bridge, Blackfriars' Bridge they passed. Sunlight all, and flashing water, and gleaming oars, and gay boats, and endless motion! out of which rose calm, solemn, reposeful, the resting yet hovering dome of St Paul's, with its satellite spires, glittering in the tremulous hot air that swathed in multitudinous ripples the mighty city. Southwark Bridge—and only London Bridge lay between them and the open river, still widening as it flowed to the aged ocean. Through the centre arch they shot, and lo! a world of masts, waiting to woo with white sails the winds that should bear them across deserts of water to lands of wealth and mystery. Through the labyrinth led the highway of the stream, and downward they still swept—past the Tower, and past the wharf where that morning Malcolm had said good-bye for a time to his four-footed subject and friend. The smack's place was empty. With her hugest of sails, she was tearing and flashing away, out of their sight, far down the river before them. Through dingy dreary Limehouse they sank, and coasted the melancholy, houseless Isle of Dogs; but on all sides were ships and ships, and when they thinned at last, Greenwich rose before them. London and the parks looked unendurable from this more varied life, more plentiful air, and above all more abundant space. The very spirit of freedom seemed to wave his wings about the yacht, fanning full her sails. Florimel breathed as if she never could have enough of the sweet wind; each breath gave her all the boundless region whence it blew; she gazed as if she would fill her soul with the sparkling gray of the water, the sun-melted blue of the sky, and the incredible green of the flat shores. For minutes she would be silent, her parted lips revealing her absorbed delight, then break out in a volley of questions, now addressing Malcolm, now Travers. She tried Davy too, but Davy knew nothing except his duty here. The Thames was like an unknown eternity to the creature of the Wan Water—about which, however, he could have told her a thousand things. Down and down the river they flew, and not until miles and miles of meadows had come between her and London, not indeed until Gravesend appeared, did it occur to Florimel that perhaps it might be well to think by-and-by of returning. But she trusted everything to Malcolm, who of course would see that everything was as it ought to be.

Her excitement began to flag a little. She was getting tired. The bottle had been strained by the ferment of the wine. She turned to Malcolm.

"Had we not better be putting about?" she said. "I should like to go on for ever—but we must come another day, better provided. We shall hardly be in time for lunch."

It was nearly four o'clock, but she rarely looked at her watch, and indeed wound it up only now and then.

"Will you go below and have some lunch, my lady?" said Malcolm.

"There can't be anything on board!" she answered.

"Come and see my lady," rejoined Malcolm, and led the way to the companion.

When she saw the little cabin, she gave a cry of delight.

"Why, it is just like our own cabin in the Psyche," she said, "only smaller! Is it not Malcolm?"

"It is smaller, my lady," returned Malcolm, "but then there is a little state-room beyond."

On the table was a nice meal—cold, but not the less agreeable in the summer weather. Everything looked charming. There were flowers; the linen was snowy; and the bread was the very sort Florimel liked best.

"It is a perfect fairy-tale!" she cried. "And I declare here is our crest on the forks and spoons!—What does it all mean, Malcolm?"

But Malcolm had slipped away, and gone on deck again, leaving her to food and conjecture, while he brought Rose up from the fore-cabin for a little air. Finding her fast asleep, however, he left her undisturbed.

Florimel finished her meal, and set about examining the cabin more closely. The result was bewilderment. How could a yacht, fitted with such completeness, such luxury, be lying for hire in the Thames? As for the crest on the plate, that was a curious coincidence: many people had the same crest. But both materials and colours were like those of the Pysche! Then the pretty bindings on the book-shelves attracted her: every book was either one she knew or one of which Malcolm had spoken to her! He must have had a hand in the business! Next she opened the door of the state-room; but when she saw the lovely little white berth, and the indications of every comfort belonging to a lady's chamber, she could keep her pleasure to herself no longer. She hastened to the companion-way, and called Malcolm.

"What *does* it all mean?" she said, her eyes and cheeks glowing with delight.

"It means, my lady, that you are on board your own yacht, the Pysche. I brought her with me from Portlossie, and have had her fitted up according to the wish you once expressed to my lord, your father, that you could sleep on board. Now you might make a voyage of many days in her."

"Oh, Malcolm!" was all Florimel could answer. She was too pleased to think as yet of any of the thousand questions that might naturally have followed.

"Why, you've got the Arabian Nights, and all my favourite books there!" she said at length.—"How long shall we have before we get among the ships again?"

She fancied she had given orders to return, and that the boat had been put about.

"A good many hours, my lady," answered Malcolm.

"Ah, of course!" she returned; it takes much longer against wind and tide.—But my time is my own," she added, rather in the manner of one asserting a freedom she did not feel, "and I don't see why I should trouble myself. It will make some to-do, I daresay, if I don't appear at dinner; but it won't do anybody any harm. They wouldn't break their hearts if they never saw me again."

"Not one of them, my lady," said Malcolm.

She lifted her head sharply, but took no farther notice of his remark.

"I won't be plagued any more," she said, holding counsel with herself, but intending Malcolm to hear. "I will break with them rather. Why should I not be as free as Clementina? She comes and goes when and where she likes, and does what she pleases."

"Why, indeed?" said Malcolm; and a pause followed, during which Florimel stood apparently thinking, but in reality growing sleepy.

"I will lie down a little," she said, "with one of those lovely books."

The excitement, the air, and the pleasure generally had wearied her. Nothing could have suited Malcolm better. He left her. She went to her berth, and fell fast asleep.

When she awoke, it was some time before she could think where she was. A strange ghostly light was about her, in which she could see nothing plain; but the motion helped her to understand. She rose, and crept to the companion ladder, and up on deck. Wonder upon wonder! A clear full moon reigned high in the heavens, and below there was nothing but water, gleaming with her molten face, or rushing past the boat lead-coloured, gray, and white. Here and there a vessel—a snow-cloud of sails—would glide between them and the moon, and turn black from truck to water-line. The mast of the Psyche had shot up to its full height; the reef-points of the mainsail were loose, and the gaff was crowned with its topsail; foresail and jib were full; and she was flying as if her soul thirsted within her after infinite spaces. Yet what more could she want? All around her was wave rushing upon wave, and above her blue heaven and regnant moon. Florimel gave a great sigh of delight.

But what did it—what could it mean? What was Malcolm about? Where was he taking her? What would London say to such an escapade extraordinary? Lady Bellair would be the first to believe she had run away with her groom—she knew so many instances of that sort of thing! and Lord Liftore would be the next. It was too bad of Malcolm! But she did not feel very angry with him, notwithstanding, for had he not done it to give her pleasure? And assuredly he had not failed. He knew better than anyone how to please her—better even than Lenorme.

She looked around her. No one was to be seen but Davie, who was steering. The main-sail hid the men, and Rose, having been on deck for two or three hours, was again below. She turned to Davy. But the boy had been schooled, and only answered,

"I maunna sae naething sae lang's I'm steerin', mem."

She called Malcolm. He was beside her ere his name had left her lips. The boy's reply had irritated her, and, coming upon this sudden and utter change in her circumstances, made her feel as one no longer lady of herself and her people, but a prisoner.

"Once more, what does this mean, Malcolm?" she said, in high displeasure. "You have deceived me shamefully! You left me to believe we were on our way back to London—and here we are out at sea! Am I no longer your mistress? Am I a child, to be taken where you please?—And what, pray, is to become of the horses you left at Mr Lenorme's?"

Malcolm was glad of a question he was prepared to answer.

"They are in their own stalls by this time, my lady. I took care of that."

"Then it was all a trick to carry me off against my will!" she cried, with growing indignation.

"Hardly against your will, my lady," said Malcolm, embarrassed and thoughtful, in a tone deprecating and apologetic.

"Utterly against my will!" insisted Florimel. "Could I ever have consented to go to sea with a boatful of men, and not a woman on board? You have disgraced me, Malcolm."

Between anger and annoyance she was on the point of crying.

"It's not so bad as that, my lady.—Here, Rose!"

At his word, Rose appeared.

"I've brought one of Lady Bellair's maids for your service, my lady," Malcolm went on. "She will do the best she can to wait on you."

Florimel gave her a look.

"I don't remember you," she said.

"No, my lady. I was in the kitchen."

"Then you can't be of much use to me."

"A willing heart goes a long way, my lady," said Rose, prettily.

"That is true," returned Florimel, rather pleased. "Can you get me some tea?"

"Yes, my lady."

Florimel turned, and, much to Malcolm's content vouchsafing him not a word more, went below.

Presently a little silver lamp appeared in the roof of the cabin, and in a few minutes Davy came, carrying the tea-tray, and followed by Rose with the teapot. As soon as they were alone, Florimel began to question Rose; but the girl soon satisfied her that she knew little or nothing. When Florimel pressed her how she could go she knew not where at the desire of a fellow-servant, she gave such confused and apparently contradictory answers, that Florimel began to think ill of both her and Malcolm, and to feel more uncomfortable and indignant; and the more she dwelt upon Malcolm's presumption, and speculated as to his possible design in it, she grew the angrier.

She went again on deck. By this time she was in a passion—little mollified by the sense of her helplessness.

"MacPhail," she said, laying the restraint of dignified utterance upon her words, "I desire you to give me a good reason for your most unaccountable behaviour. Where are you taking me?"

"To Lossie House, my lady."

"Indeed!" she returned with scornful and contemptuous surprise. "Then I order you to change your course at once and return to London."

"I cannot, my lady."

"*Cannot!* Whose orders but mine are you under, pray?"

"Your father's, my lady."

"I have heard more than enough of that unfortunate—statement, and the measureless assumptions founded on it. I shall heed it no longer."

"I am only doing my best to take care of you, my lady, as I promised *him*. You will know it one day if you will but trust me."

"I have trusted you ten times too much, and have gained nothing in return but reasons for repenting it. Like all other servants made too much of, you have grown insolent. But I shall put a stop to it. I cannot possibly keep you in my service after this. Am I to pay a master where I want a servant?"

Malcolm was silent.

"You must have some reason for this strange conduct," she went on. "How can your supposed duty to my father justify you in treating me with such disrespect. Let me know your reasons. I have a right to know them."

"I will answer you, my lady," said Malcolm. "—Davy, go forward; I will take the helm.—Now, my lady, if you will sit on that cushion.—Rose, bring my lady a fur-cloak you will find in the cabin.—Now, my lady, if you will speak low that neither Davy nor Rose shall hear us.—Travers is deaf—I will answer you."

"I ask you," said Florimel, "why you have dared to bring me away like this. Nothing but some danger threatening me could justify it."

"There you say it, my lady."

"And what is the danger, pray?"

"You were going on the continent with Lady Bellair and Lord Liftore—and without me to do as I had promised."

"You insult me!" cried Florimel. "Are my movements to be subject to the approbation of my groom? Is it possible my father could give his henchman such authority over his daughter? I ask you again, where was the danger?"

"In your company, my lady."

"So!" exclaimed Florimel, attempting to rise in sarcasm as she rose in wrath, lest she should fall into undignified rage. "And what may be your objection to my companions?"

"That Lady Bellair is not respected in any circle where her history is known; and that her nephew is a scoundrel."

"It but adds to the wrong you heap on me, that you compel me to hear such wicked abuse of my father's friends," said Florimel, struggling with tears of anger. But for regard to her dignity she would have broken out in fierce and voluble rage.

"If your father knew Lord Liftore as I do, he would be the last man my lord marquis would see in your company."

"Because he gave you a beating, you have no right to slander him," said Florimel spitefully.

Malcolm laughed. He must either laugh or be angry.

"May I ask how your ladyship came to hear of that?"

"He told me himself," she answered.

"Then, my lady, he is a liar, as well as worse. It was I who gave *him* the drubbing he deserved for his insolence to my—mistress. I am sorry to mention the disagreeable fact, but it is absolutely necessary you should know what sort of man he is."

"And, if there be a lie, which of the two is more likely to tell it?"

"That question is for you, my lady, to answer."

"I never knew a servant who would not tell a lie," said Florimel.

"I was brought up a fisherman," said Malcolm.

"And," Florimel went on, "I have heard my father say no gentleman ever told a lie."

"Then Lord Liftore is no gentleman," said Malcolm. "But I am not going to plead my own cause even to you, my lady. If you can doubt me, do. I have only one thing more to say:—that when I told you and my Lady Clementina about the fisher-girl and the gentleman——"

"How dare you refer to that again? Even you ought to know there are things a lady cannot hear. It is enough you affronted me with that before Lady Clementina—and after foolish boasts on my part of your good breeding! Now you bring it up again, when I cannot escape your low talk!"

"My lady, I am sorrier than you think; but which is worse—that you should hear such a thing spoken of, or make a friend of the man who did it—and that is Lord Liftore?"

Florimel turned away, and gave her seeming attention to the moonlit waters, sweeping past the swift-sailing cutter. Malcolm's heart ached for her: he thought she was deeply troubled. But she was not half so shocked as he imagined. Infinitely worse would have been the shock to him could he have seen how little the charge against Liftore had touched her. Alas! evil communications had already in no small degree corrupted her good manners. Lady Bellair had uttered no bad words in her hearing: had softened to decency every story that required it; had not unfrequently tacked a worldly-wise moral to the end of one; and yet, and yet, such had been the tone of her telling, such the allotment of laughter and lamentation, such the acceptance of things as necessary, and such the repudiation of things as Quixotic, puritanical, impossible, that the girl's natural notions of the lovely and the clean had got dismally shaken and confused. Happily it was as yet more her judgment than her heart that was perverted. But had she spoken out what was in her thoughts as she looked over the great wallowing water, she would have merely said that for all that Liftore was no worse than other men. They were all the same. It was very unpleasant; but how could a lady help it? If men would behave so, were by nature like that, women must not make themselves miserable about it. They need ask no questions. They were not supposed to be acquainted with the least fragment of the facts, and they must cleave to their ignorance, and lay what blame there might be on the women concerned. The thing was too indecent even to think about.

Ostrich-like they must hide their heads—close their eyes and take the vice in their arms—to love, honour, and obey, as if it were virtue's self, and men as pure as their demands on their wives.

There are thousands that virtually reason thus: Only ignore the thing effectually, and for you it is not. Lie right thoroughly to yourself, and the thing is gone. The lie destroys the fact. So reasoned Lady Macbeth—until conscience at last awoke, and she could no longer keep even the smell of the blood from her. What need Lady Lossie care about the fisher-girl, or any other concerned with his past, so long as he behaved like a gentleman to her! Malcolm was a foolish meddling fellow, whose interference was the more troublesome that it was honest.

She stood thus gazing on the waters that heaved and swept astern, but without knowing that she saw them, her mind full of such nebulous matter as, condensed, would have made such thoughts as I have set down. And still and ever the water rolled and tossed away behind in the moonlight.

"Oh, my lady!" said Malcolm, "what it would be to have a soul as big and as clean as all this!"

She made no reply, did not turn her head, or acknowledge that she heard him, a few minutes more she stood, then went below in silence, and Malcolm saw no more of her that night.

## CHAPTER LII.

### HOPE CHAPEL.

It was Sunday, during which Malcolm lay at the point of death some three stories above his sister's room. There, in the morning, while he was at the worst, she was talking with Clementina, who had called to see whether she would not go and hear the preacher of whom he had spoken with such fervour.

Florimel laughed.

"You seem to take everything for gospel Malcolm says, Clementina!"

"Certainly not," returned Clementina, rather annoyed. "Gospel now-a-days is what nobody disputes and nobody heeds; but I do heed what Malcolm says, and intend to find out, if I *can*, whether there is any reality in it. I thought you had a high opinion of your groom!"

"I would take his word for anything a man's word can be taken for," said Florimel.

"But you don't set much store by his judgment?"

"Oh, I daresay he's right. But I don't care for the things you like so much to talk with him about. He's a sort of poet, anyhow, and poets must be absurd. They are always either dreaming or talking about their dreams. They care nothing for the realities of life. No—if you want advice, you must go to your lawyer or clergyman, or some man of common sense, neither groom nor poet."

"Then, Florimel, it comes to this—that this groom of yours is one of the truest of men, and one who possessed your father's confidence, but you are so much his superior that you are capable of judging him, and justified in despising his judgment."

"Only in practical matters, Clementina."

"And duty towards God is with you such a practical matter that you cannot listen to anything he has got to say about it."

Florimel shrugged her shoulders.

"For my part, I would give all I have to know there was a God worth believing in."

"Clementina!"

"What?"

"Of course there is a God. It is very horrible to deny it."

"Which is worse—to deny *it*, or to deny *him?* Now, I confess to doubting *it*—that is, the fact of a God; but you seem to me to deny God himself, for you admit there is a God—think it very wicked to deny that, and yet you don't take interest enough in him to wish to learn anything about him. You won't *think*, Florimel. I don't fancy you ever really *think*."

Florimel again laughed.

"I am glad," she said, "that you don't judge me *incapable* of that high art. But it is not so very long since Malcolm used to hint something much the same about yourself, my lady!"

"Then he was quite right," returned Clementina. "I am only just beginning to think, and if I can find a teacher, here I am, his pupil."

"Well, I suppose I can spare my groom quite enough to teach you all he knows," Florimel said, with what Clementina took for a marked absence of expression. She reddened. But she was not one to defend herself before her principles.

"If he can, why should he not?" she said. "But it was of his friend Mr Graham I was thinking—not himself."

"You cannot tell whether he has got anything to teach you."

"Your groom's testimony gives likelihood enough to make it my duty to go and see. I intend to find the place this evening."

"It must be some little ranting methodist conventicle! He would not be allowed to preach in a church, you know."

"Of course not! The church of England is like the apostle that forbade the man casting out devils, and got forbid himself for it—with this difference that she won't be forbid. Well, she chooses her portion with Dives and not Lazarus. She is the most arrant respecter of persons I know, and her Christianity is worse than a farce. It was that first of all that drove me to doubt. If I could find a place where everything was just the opposite, the poorer it was the better I should like it. It makes me feel quite wicked to hear a smug parson reading the gold ring and the goodly apparel, while the pew-openers beneath are illustrating in dumb show the very thing the apostle is pouring out the vial of his indignation upon over their heads;—doing it calmly and without a suspicion, for the parson, while he reads, is rejoicing in his heart over the increasing aristocracy of his congregation. The farce is fit to make a devil in torment laugh."

Once more, Florimel laughed aloud.

"Another revolution, Clementina, and we shall have you heading the canaille to destroy Westminster Abbey."

"I would follow any leader to destroy falsehood," said Clementina. "No canaille will take that up until it meddles with their stomachs or their pew-rents."

"Really, Clementina, you are the worst Jacobin I ever heard talk. My groom is quite an aristocrat beside you."

"Not an atom more than I am. I do acknowledge an aristocracy—but it is one neither of birth nor of intellect nor of wealth."

"What is there besides to make one?"

"Something I hope to find before long. What if there be indeed a kingdom and an aristocracy of life and truth!—Will you or will you not go with me to hear this schoolmaster?"

"I will go anywhere with you, if it were only to be seen with such a beauty," said Florimel, throwing her arms round her neck and kissing her.

Clementina gently returned the embrace, and the thing was settled.

The sound of their wheels, pausing in swift revolution with the clangor of iron hoofs on rough stones at the door of the chapel, refreshed the diaconal heart like the sound of water in the desert. For the first time in the memory of the oldest, the day-spring of success seemed on the point of breaking over Hope Chapel. The ladies were ushered in by Mr Marshal himself, to Clementina's disgust and Florimel's amusement, with much the same attention as his own shop-walker would have shown to carriage-customers.—How could a man who taught light and truth be found in such a mean *entourage?* But the setting was not the jewel. A real stone *might* be found in a copper ring. So said Clementina to herself as she sat waiting her hoped for instructor.

Mrs Catanach settled her broad back into its corner, chuckling over her own wisdom and foresight. Her seat was at the pulpit end of the chapel, at right angles to almost all the rest of the pews, chosen because thence, if indeed she could not well see the preacher, she could get a good glimpse of nearly everyone that entered. Keen-sighted both physically and intellectually, she recognized Florimel the moment she saw her.

"Twa doos mair to the boody-craw!" she laughed to herself. "Ae man thrashin', an' twa birdies pickin'!" she went on, quoting the old nursery nonsense. Then she stooped, and let down her veil. Florimel hated her, and therefore might know her.

"It's the day o' the Lord wi' auld Sanny Grame!" she resumed to herself, as she lifted her head. "He's stickit nae mair, but a chosen trumpet at last! Foul fa' 'im for a wearifu' cratur for a' that! He has nowther balm o' grace nor pith o' damnation. Yon laad Flemin', 'at preached i' the Baillies' Barn aboot the dowgs gaein' roon' an' roon' the wa's o' the New Jeroozlem, gien he had but hauden thegither an' no gean to the worms sae sune, wad hae dung a score o' 'im. But Sanny angers me to that degree 'at but for rizons—like yon twa—I wad gang oot i' the mids o' ane o' 's palahvers, an' never come back, though I ha'e a haill quarter o' my sittin' to sit oot yet, an' it cost me dear, an' fits the auld back o' me no that ill."

When Mr Graham rose to read the psalm, great was Clementina's disappointment: he looked altogether, as she thought, of a sort with the place—mean and dreary—of the chapel very chapelly, and she did not believe it could be the man of whom Malcolm had spoken. By a strange coincidence however, a kind of occurrence as frequent as strange, he read for his text that same passage about the gold ring and the vile raiment, in which we learn how exactly the behaviour of the early Jewish churches corresponded to that of the later English ones, and Clementina soon began to alter her involuntary judgment of him when she found herself listening to an utterance beside which her most voluble indignation would have been but as the babble of a child. Sweeping, incisive, withering, blasting denunciation, logic and poetry combining in one torrent of genuine eloquence, poured confusion and dismay upon head and heart of all who set themselves up for pillars of the church without practising the first principles of the doctrine of Christ—men who, professing to gather their fellows together in the name of Christ, conducted the affairs of the church on the principles of hell—men so blind and dull and slow of heart, that they would never know what the outer darkness meant until it had closed around them—men who paid court to the rich for their money, and to the poor for their numbers—men who sought gain first, safety next, and the will of God not at all—men whose presentation of Christianity was enough to drive the world to a preferable infidelity.

Clementina listened with her very soul. All doubt as to whether this was Malcolm's friend, vanished within two minutes of his commencement. If she rejoiced a little more than was humble or healthful in finding that such a man thought as she thought, she gained this good notwithstanding—the presence and power of a man who believed in righteousness the doctrine he taught. Also she perceived that the principles of equality he held, were founded on the infinite possibilities of the individual—and of the race only through the individual; and that he held these principles with an absoluteness, an earnestness, a simplicity, that dwarfed her loudest objurgation to the uneasy murmuring of a sleeper. She could not but trust him, and her hope grew great that perhaps for her he held the key of the kingdom of heaven. She saw that if what this man said was true, then the gospel was represented by men who knew nothing of its real nature, and by such she had been led into a false judgment of it. "If such a man," said the schoolmaster in conclusion, "would but once represent to himself that the man whom he regards as beneath him, *may* nevertheless be immeasurably above him—and that after no arbitrary judgment, but according to the absolute facts of creation, the scale of the kingdom of God, in which *being* is rang; if he could persuade himself of the possibility that he may yet have to worship before the feet of those on whom he looks down as on the creatures of another and meaner order of creation, would it not sting him to rise, and, lest this should be one of such, make offer of his chair to the poor man in the vile raiment? Would he ever more, all his life long, dare to say, 'Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool?'"

During the week that followed, Clementina reflected with growing delight on what she had heard, and looked forward to hearing more of a kind correspondent on the approaching Sunday. Nor did the shock of the disappearance of Florimel with Malcolm abate her desire to be taught by Malcolm's friend.

Lady Bellair was astounded, mortified, enraged. Liftore turned grey with passion, then livid with mortification, at the news. Not one of all their circle, as Florimel had herself foreseen, doubted for a moment that she had run away with that groom of hers. Indeed, upon examination, it became evident that the scheme had been for some time in hand: the yacht they had gone on board had been lying there for months; and although she was her own mistress, and might marry whom she pleased, it was no wonder she had run away, for how could she have held her face to it, or up after it?

Lady Clementina accepted the general conclusion, but judged it individually. She had more reason to be distressed at what seemed to have taken place than anyone else; indeed it stung her to the heart, wounding her worse than in its first stunning effects she was able to know; yet she thought better rather than worse of Florimel because of it. What she did not like in her with reference to the affair was the depreciatory manner in which she had always spoken of Malcolm. If genuine, it was quite inconsistent with due regard for the man for whom she was yet prepared to sacrifice so much; if, on the other hand, her slight opinion of his judgment was a pretence, then she had been disloyal to the just prerogatives of friendship.

The latter part of that week was the sorest time Clementina had ever passed. But, like a true woman, she fought her own misery and sense of loss, as well as her annoyance and anxiety, constantly saying to herself that, be the thing as it might, she could never cease to be glad that she had known Malcolm MacPhail.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### A NEW PUPIL.

THE sermon Lady Clementina heard with such delight had followed one levelled at the common and right worldly idea of success harboured by each, and unquestioned by one of the chief men of the community: together they caused a strange uncertain sense of discomfort in the mind diaconal. Slow to perceive that that idea, nauseous in his presentment of it, was the very same cherished and justified by themselves; unwilling also to believe that in his denunciation of respecters of persons they themselves had a full share, they yet felt a little uneasy from the vague whispers of their consciences on the side of the neglected principles enounced, clashing with the less vague conviction that if those whispers were encouraged and listened to, the ruin of their hopes for their chapel, and their influence in connection with it, must follow. They eyed each other doubtfully, and there appeared a general tendency amongst them to close-pressed lips and single shakes of the head. But there were other forces at work—tending in the same direction.

Whatever may have been the influence of the schoolmaster upon the congregation gathered in Hope Chapel, there was one on whom his converse, supplemented by his preaching, had taken genuine hold. Frederick Marshal had begun to open his eyes to the fact that, regarded as a profession, the ministry, as they called it in their communion, was the meanest way of making a living in the whole creation, one deserving the contempt of every man honest enough to give honourable work, that is, work worth the money, for the money paid him. Also he had a glimmering insight, on the other hand, into the truth of what the dominie said—that it was the noblest of martyrdoms to the man who, sent by God, loved the truth with his whole soul, and was never happier than when bearing witness of it, except, indeed, in those blessed moments when receiving it of the Father. In consequence of this opening of his eyes the youth recoiled with dismay from the sacrilegious mockery of which he had been guilty in meditating the presumption of teaching holy things of which the sole sign that he knew anything was now afforded by this same recoil. At last he was not far from the kingdom of heaven, though whether he was to be sent to persuade men that that kingdom was amongst them, and must be in them, remained a question.

On the morning after the latter of those two sermons, Frederick, as they sat at breakfast, succeeded, with no small effort, for he feared his mother, in blurting out to his father the request that he might be taken into the counting-house; and when indignantly requested, over the top of the teapot, to explain himself, declared that he found it impossible to give his mind to a course of education which could only end in the disappointment of his parents, seeing he was at length satisfied that he had no call to the ministry. His father was not displeased at the thought of having him at the shop; but his mother was for some moments speechless with angry tribulation. Recovering herself, with scornful bitterness she requested to know to what tempter he had been giving ear—for tempted he must have been ere son of hers would have been guilty of backsliding from *the cause*, of taking his hand from the plough and looking behind him. The youth returned such answers as, while they satisfied his father he was right, served only to convince his mother, where yet conviction was hardly needed, that she had to thank the dominie for his defection, his apostasy from the church to the world.

Incapable of perceiving that now first there was hope of a genuine disciple in the child of her affection, she was filled with the gall of disappointment, and with spite against the man who had taught her son how worse than foolish it is to aspire to teach before one has learned; nor did she fail to cast scathing reflections on her husband, in that he had brought home a viper in his bosom, a wolf into his fold, the wretched minion of a worldly church to lead her son away captive at his will; and partly no doubt from his last uncomfortable sermons, but mainly from the play of Mrs Marshal's tongue on her husband's tympanum, the deacons in full conclave agreed that no further renewal of the invitation to preach "for them" should be made to the schoolmaster—just the end of the business Mr Graham had expected, and for which he had provided. On Tuesday morning he smiled to himself, and wondered whether, if he were to preach in his own schoolroom the next Sunday evening, anyone would come to hear him. On Saturday he received a cool letter of thanks for his services, written by the ironmonger in the name of the deacons, enclosing a cheque, tolerably liberal as ideas went, in acknowledgment of them. The cheque Mr Graham returned, saying that, as he was not a preacher by profession, he had no right to take fees. It was a half-holiday: he walked up to Hampstead Heath, and was paid for everything, in sky and cloud, fresh air, and a glorious sunset.

When the end of her troubled week came, and the Sunday of her expectation brought lovely weather, with a certain vague suspicion of peace, into the regions of Mayfair and Spitalfields, Clementina walked across the Regent's Park to Hope Chapel, and its morning observances; but thought herself poorly repaid for her exertions by having to listen to a dreadful sermon and worse prayers from Mr Masquar — one of the chief priests of Commonplace—a comfortable idol to serve, seeing he accepts as homage to himself all that any man offers to his own person, opinions, or history. But Clementina contrived to endure it, comforting herself that she had made a mistake in supposing Mr Graham preached in the morning.

In the evening her carriage once again drew up with clang and clatter at the door of the chapel. But her coachman was out of temper at having to leave the bosom of his family circle—as he styled the table that upheld his pot of beer and jar of tobacco—of a Sunday, and sought relief to his feelings in giving his horses a lesson in crawling; the result of which was fortunate for his mistress: when she entered, the obnoxious Mr Masquar was already reading the hymn. She turned at once and made for the door.

But her carriage was already gone. A strange sense of loneliness and desolation seized her. The place had grown hateful to her, and she would have fled from it. Yet she lingered in the porch. The eyes of the man in the pulpit, with his face of false solemnity and low importance—she seemed to feel the look of them on her back, yet she lingered. Now that Malcolm was gone, how was she to learn when Mr Graham would be preaching?

"If you please, ma'am," said a humble and dejected voice.

She turned and saw the seamed and smoky face of the pew-opener, who had been watching her from the lobby, and had crept out after her. She dropped a courtesy, and went on hurriedly, with an anxious look now and then over her shoulder—

"Oh, ma'am! we shan't see *him* no more. Our people here—they're very good people, but they don't like to be told the truth. It seems to me as if they knowed it so well they thought as how there was no need for them to mind it."

"You don't mean that Mr Graham has given up preaching here?"

"They've given up astin' of 'im to preach, lady. But if ever there was a good man in that pulpit, Mr Graham he do be that man!"

"Do you know where he lives?"

"Yes, ma'am; but it would be hard to direct you." Here she looked in at the door of the chapel with a curious half-frightened glance, as if to satisfy herself that the inner door was closed. "But," she went on, "they won't miss me now the service is begun, and I can be back before it's over. I'll show you where, ma'am."

"I should be greatly obliged to you," said Clementina, "only I am sorry to give you the trouble."

"To tell the truth, I'm only too glad to get away," she returned, "for the place it do look like a cementery, now *he's* out of it."

"Was he so kind to you?"

"He never spoke word to me, as to myself like, no, nor never gave me sixpence, like Mr Masquar do; but he give me strength in my heart to bear up, and that's better than meat or money."

It was a good half-hour's walk, and during it Clementina held what conversation she might with her companion. It was not much the woman had to say of a general sort. She knew little beyond her own troubles and the help that met them, but what else are the two main forces whose composition results in upward motion? Her world was very limited—the houses in which she went charing, the chapel she swept and dusted, the neighbours with whom she gossipped, the little shops where she bought the barest needs of her bare life; but it was at least large enough to leave behind her; and if she was not one to take the kingdom of heaven by force, she was yet one to creep quietly into it. The earthly life of such as she—immeasurably less sordid than that of the poet who will not work for his daily bread, or that of the speculator who, having settled money on his wife, risks that of his neighbour—passing away like a cloud, will hang in their west, stained indeed, but with gold, blotted, but with roses. Dull as it all was now, Clementina yet gained from her unfoldings a new out-look upon life, its needs, its sorrows, its consolations, and its hopes; nor was there any vulgar pity in the smile of the one, or of degrading acknowledgment in the tears of the other, when a piece of gold passed from hand to hand, as they parted.

The Sunday-sealed door of the stationer's shop—for there was no private entrance to the house—was opened by another sad-faced woman. What a place to seek the secret of life in! Love-lily enfolds the husk its kernel; but what the human eye turns from as squalid and unclean may enfold the seed that clasps, couched in infinite withdrawment, the vital germ of all that is lovely and graceful, harmonious and strong, all without which no poet would sing, no martyr burn, no king rule in righteousness, no geometrician pore over the marvellous *must*.

The woman led her through the counter into a little dingy room behind the shop, looking out on a yard a few feet square, with a water-butt, half-a-dozen flower-pots, and a maimed plaster Cupid perched on the window-sill. There sat the schoolmaster, in conversation with a lady, whom the woman of the house, awed by her sternness and grandeur, had, out of regard to her lodger's feelings, shown into her parlour and not into his bedroom.

Cherishing the hope that the patent consequences of his line of action might have already taught him moderation, Mrs Marshal, instead of going to chapel to hear Mr Masquar, had paid Mr Graham a visit, with the object of enlisting his sympathies if she could, at all events his services, in the combating of the scruples he had himself aroused in the bosom of her son. What had passed between them I do not care to record, but when Lady Clementina—unannounced of the landlady—entered, there was light enough, notwithstanding the non-reflective properties of the water-butt, to reveal Mrs Marshal flushed and flashing, Mr Graham grave and luminous, and to enable the chapel-business-eye of Mrs Marshal, which saw every stranger that entered "Hope," at once to recognise her as having made one of the congregation the last Sunday evening. Evidently one of Mr Graham's party, she was not prejudiced in her favour. But there was that in her manner which impressed her—that something ethereal and indescribable which she herself was constantly aping, and, almost involuntarily, she took upon herself such honours as the place, despicable in her eyes, would admit of. She rose, made a sweeping courtesy, and addressed Lady Clementina with such a manner as people of Mrs Marshal's ambitions put off and on like their clothes.

"Pray, take a seat, ma'am, such as it is," she said, with a wave of her hand. "I believe I have had the pleasure of seeing you at our place."

Lady Clementina sat down: the room was too small to stand in, and Mrs Marshal seemed to take the half of it.

"I am not aware of the honour," she returned, doubtful what the woman meant—perhaps some shop or dress-maker's. Clementina was not one who delighted in freezing her humbler fellow-creatures, as we know; but there was something altogether repulsive in the would-be-grand but really arrogant behaviour of her fellow-visitor.

"I mean," said Mrs Marshal, a little abashed, for ambition is not strength, "at our little Bethel in Kentish Town! Not that *we* live there!" she explained with a superior smile.

"Oh! I think I understand. You must mean the chapel where this gentleman was preaching."

"That *is* my meaning," assented Mrs Marshal.

"I went there to-night," said Clementina, turning with some timidity to Mr Graham. "That I did not find you there, sir, will, I hope, explain——" Here she paused, and turned again to Mrs Marshal. "I see you think with me, ma'am, that a true teacher is worth following."

As she said this she turned once more to Mr Graham, who sat listening with a queer, amused, but right courteous smile.

"I hope you will pardon me," she continued, "for venturing to call upon you, and, as I have the misfortune to find you occupied, allow me to call another day. If you would set me a time, I should be more obliged than I can tell you," she concluded, her voice trembling a little.

"Stay now, if you will, madam," returned the schoolmaster, with a bow of oldest-fashioned courtesy. "This lady has done laying her commands upon me, I believe."

"As you think proper to call them commands, Mr Graham, I conclude you intend to obey them," said Mrs Marshal, with a forced smile and an attempt at pleasantry.

"Not for the world, madam," he answered. "Your son is acting the part of a gentleman—yes, I make bold to say, of one who is very nigh the kingdom of heaven, if not indeed within its gate, and before I would check him I would be burnt at the stake—even were your displeasure the fire, madam," he added, with a kindly bow. "Your son is a fine fellow."

"He would be, if he were left to himself. Good evening, Mr Graham. Good-bye, rather, for I *think* we are not likely to meet again."

"In heaven, I hope, madam; for by that time we shall be able to understand each other," said the schoolmaster, still kindly.

Mrs Marshal made no answer beyond a facial flash as she turned to Clementina.

"Good evening, ma'am," she said. "To pay court to the earthen vessel because of the treasure it may happen to hold, is to be a respecter of persons as bad as any."

An answering flash broke from Clementina's blue orbs, but her speech was more than calm as she returned,

"I learned something of that lesson last Sunday evening, I hope, ma'am. But you have left me far behind, for you seem to have learned disrespect even to the worthiest of persons. Good evening, ma'am."

She looked the angry matron full in the face, with an icy regard, from which, as from the Gorgon eye, she fled.

The victor turned to the schoolmaster.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, "for presuming to take your part, but a gentleman is helpless with a vulgar woman."

"I thank you, madam. I hope the sharpness of your rebuke ——but indeed the poor woman can hardly help her rudeness, for she is very worldly, and believes herself very pious. It is the old story—hard for the rich."

Clementina was struck.

"I too am rich and worldly," she said. "But I know that I am not pious, and if you would but satisfy me that religion is common sense, I would try to be religious with all my heart and soul."

"I willingly undertake the task. But let us know each other a little first. And lest I should afterwards seem to have taken an advantage of you, I hope you have no wish to be nameless to me, for my friend Malcolm MacPhail had so described you that I recognized your ladyship at once."

Clementina said that, on the contrary, she had given her name to the woman who opened the door.

"It is because of what Malcolm said of you that I ventured to come to you," she added.

"Have you seen Malcolm lately?" he asked, his brow clouding a little. "It is more than a week since he has been to me."

Thereupon, with embarrassment, such as she would never have felt except in the presence of pure simplicity, she told of his disappearance with his mistress.

"And you think they have run away together?" said the schoolmaster, his face beaming with what, to Clementina's surprise, looked almost like merriment.

"Yes, I think so," she answered. "Why not, if they choose?"

"I will say this for my friend Malcolm," returned Mr Graham composedly, "that whatever he did I should expect to find not only all right in intention, but prudent and well-devised also. The present may well seem a rash, ill-considered affair for both of them, but——"

"I see no necessity either for explanation or excuse," said Clementina, too eager to mark that she interrupted Mr Graham. "In making up her mind to marry him, Lady Lossie has shown greater wisdom and courage than, I confess, I had given her credit for."

"And Malcolm?" rejoined the schoolmaster softly. "Should you say of him that he showed equal wisdom?"

"I decline to give an opinion upon the gentleman's part in the business," answered Clementina, laughing, but glad there was so little light in the room, for she was painfully conscious of the burning of her cheeks. "Besides, I have no measure to apply to Malcolm," she went on, a little hurriedly. "He is like no one else I have ever talked with, and I confess there is something about him I cannot understand. Indeed, he is beyond me altogether."

"Perhaps, having known him from infancy, I might be able to explain him," returned Mr Graham, in a tone that invited questioning.

"Perhaps, then," said Clementina, "I may be permitted, in jealousy for the teaching I have received of him, to confess my bewilderment that one so young should be capable of dealing with such things as he delights in. The youth of the prophet makes me doubt his prophecy."

"At least," rejoined Mr Graham, "the phenomenon coincides with what the master of these things said of them—that they were revealed to babes and not to the wise and prudent. As to Malcolm's wonderful facility in giving them form and utterance, that depends so immediately on the clear sight of them, that, granted a little of the gift poetic, developed through reading and talk, we need not wonder much at it."

"You consider your friend a genius?" suggested Clementina.

"I consider him possessed of a kind of heavenly common sense, equally at home in the truths of divine relation, and the facts of the human struggle with nature and her forces. I should never have discovered my own ignorance in certain points of the mathematics but for the questions that boy put to me before he was twelve years of age. A thing not understood lay in his mind like a fretting foreign body. But there is a far more important factor concerned than this exceptional degree of insight. Understanding is the reward of obedience. Peter says 'the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given them that *obey* him.' Obedience is the key to every door. I am perplexed at the stupidity of the ordinary religious being. In the most practical of all matters, he will talk, and speculate, and try to feel, but he will not set himself to *do*. It is different with Malcolm. From the first he has been trying to obey. Nor do I see why it should be strange that even a child should understand these things, if they are the very elements of the region for which we were created and to which our being holds essential relations, as a bird to the air, or a fish to the sea. If a man may not understand the things of God whence he came, what shall he understand?"

"How, then, is it that so few do understand?"

"Because where they know, so few obey. This boy, I say, did. If you had seen, as I have, the almost superhuman struggles of his will to master the fierce temper his ancestors gave him, you would marvel less at what he has so early become. I have seen him, white with passion, cast himself on his face on the shore, and cling with his hands to the earth as if in a paroxysm of bodily suffering; then after a few moments rise and do a service to the man who had wronged him. Were it any wonder if the light should have soon gone up in a soul like that? When I was a younger man I used to go out with the fishing-boats now and then, drawn chiefly by my love for the boy, who earned his own bread that way before he was in his teens. One night we were caught in a terrible storm, and had to stand out to sea in the pitch dark. He was then not fourteen. 'Can you let a boy like that steer?' I said to the captain of the boat. 'Yes; just a boy like that,' he answered. 'Ma'colm 'ill steer as straucht's a porpus.' When he was relieved, he crept over the thwarts to where I sat. '*Is* there any true definition of a straight line, sir?' he said. 'I can't take the one in my Euclid.'—'So you're not afraid, Malcolm?" I returned, heedless of his question, for I wanted to see what he would answer. 'Afraid, sir!' he rejoined with some surprise, 'I wad ill like to hear the Lord say, *O thou o' little faith!*'—'But,' I persisted, 'God may mean to drown you!'—'An' what for no?' he returned. 'Gien ye war to tell me 'at I micht be droon't ohn him meant it, I wad be fleyt eneuch.' I see your ladyship does not understand: I will interpret the dark saying: 'And why should he not drown me? If you were to tell me I might be drowned without his meaning it, I should be frightened enough.' Believe me, my lady, the right way is simple to find, though only they that seek it *first* can find it. But I have allowed myself," concluded the schoolmaster, "to be carried adrift in my laudation of Malcolm. You did not come to hear praises of him, my lady."

"I owe him much," said Clementina. "—But tell me then, Mr Graham, how is it that you know there is a God, and one—one—fit to be trusted as you trust him?"

"In no way that I can bring to bear on the reason of another so as to produce conviction."

"Then what is to become of me?"

"I can do for you what is far better. I can persuade you to look and see whether before your own door stands not a gate—lies not a path to walk in. Entering by that gate, walking in that path, you shall yourself arrive at the conviction, which no man can give you, that there is a living Love and Truth at the heart of your being, and pervading all that surrounds you. The man who seeks the truth in any other manner will never find it. Listen to me a moment, my lady. I loved that boy's mother. Naturally she did not love me—how could she? I was very unhappy. I sought comfort from the unknown source of my life. He gave me to understand his Son, and so I understood himself, knew that I came of God, and was comforted."

"But how do you know that it was not all a delusion—the product of your own fervid imagination? Do not mistake me: I want to find it true."

"It is a right and honest question, my lady. I will tell you

Not to mention the conviction which a truth beheld must carry with itself, and concerning which there can be no argument either with him who does or him who does not see it, this experience goes far with me, and would with you if you had it, as you may—namely, that all my difficulties and confusions have gone on clearing themselves up ever since I set out to walk in that way. My consciousness of life is threefold what it was; my perception of what is lovely around me, and my delight in it, threefold; my power of understanding things and of ordering my way, threefold also; the same with my hope and my courage, my love to my kind, my power of forgiveness. In short, I cannot but believe that my whole being and its whole world are in process of rectification for me. Is not that something to set against the doubt born of the eye and ear, and the questions of an intellect that can neither grasp nor disprove? I say nothing of better things still. To the man who receives such as I mean, they are the heart of life; to the man who does not, they exist not. But I say—if I thus find my whole being enlightened and redeemed, and know that therein I fare according to the word of the man of whom the old story tells: if I find that his word, and the result of action founded upon that word, correspond and agree, opening a heaven within and beyond me, in which I see myself delivered from all that now in myself is to myself despicable and unlovely; if I can reasonably—reasonably to myself, not to another—cherish hopes of a glory of conscious being, divinely better than all my imagination when most daring could invent—a glory springing from absolute unity with my creator, and therefore with my neighbour; if the Lord of the ancient tale, I say, has thus held word with me, am I likely to doubt much or long whether there be such a lord or no?"

"What, then, is the way that lies before my own door? Help me to see it."

"It is just the old way—as old as the conscience—that of obedience to any and every law of personal duty. But if you have ever seen the Lord, if only from afar—if you have any vaguest suspicion that the Jew Jesus, who professed to have come from God, was a better man than other men, one of your first duties must be to open your ears to his words, and see whether they commend themselves to you as true; then, if they do, to obey them with your whole strength and might, upheld by the hope of the vision promised in them to the obedient. This is the way of life, which will lead a man out of the miseries of the nineteenth century, as it led Paul out of the miseries of the first."

There followed a little pause, and then a long talk about what the schoolmaster had called the old story; in which he spoke with such fervid delight of this and that point in the tale; removing this and that stumbling-block by giving the true reading or the right interpretation; showing the what and why and how—the very intent of our Lord in the thing he said or did, that, for the first time in her life, Clementina began to feel as if such a man must really have lived, that his blessed feet must really have walked over the acres of Palestine, that his human heart must indeed have thought and felt, worshipped and borne, right humanly. Even in the presence of her new teacher, and with his words in her ears, she began to desire her own chamber that she might sit down with the neglected story and read for herself.

The schoolmaster walked with her to the chapel door. There her carriage was already waiting. He put her in, and, while the Reverend Jacob Masquar was still holding forth upon the difference between adoption and justification, Clementina drove away, never more to delight the hearts of the deacons with the noise of the hoofs of her horses, staying the wheels of her yellow chariot.

## CHAPTER LIV.

### THE FEY FACTOR.

WHEN Mr Crathie heard of the outrage the people of Scaurnose had committed upon the surveyors, he vowed he would empty every house in the place at Michaelmas. His wife warned him that such a wholesale proceeding must put him in the wrong with the country, seeing they could not *all* have been guilty. He replied it would be impossible, the rascals hung so together, to find out the ringleaders even. She returned that they all deserved it, and that a correct discrimination was of no consequence; it would be enough to the purpose if he made a difference. People would then say he had done his best to distinguish. The factor was persuaded and made out a list of those who were to leave, in which he took care to include all the principal men, to whom he gave warning forthwith to quit their houses at Michaelmas. I do not know whether the notice was in law sufficient, but exception was not taken on that score.

Scaurnose, on the receipt of the papers, all at the same time, by the hand of the bellman of Portlossie, was like a hive about to swarm. Endless and complicated were the comings and goings between the houses, the dialogues, confabulations, and consultations, in the one street and its many closes. In the middle of it, in front of the little public-house, stood, all that day and the next, a group of men and women, for no five minutes in its component parts the same, but, like a cloud, ever slow-dissolving, and as continuously re-forming, some dropping away, others falling to. Such nid-nodding, such uplifting and fanning of palms among the women, such semi-revolving side-shakes of the head, such demonstration of fists, and such cursing among the men, had never before been seen and heard in Scaurnose. The result was a conclusion to make common cause with the first victim of the factor's tyranny, namely Blue Peter, whose expulsion would arrive three months before theirs, and was unquestionably head and front of the same cruel scheme for putting down the fisher-folk altogether.

Three of them, therefore, repaired to Joseph's house, commissioned with the following proposal and condition of compact: that Joseph should defy the notice given him to quit, they pledging themselves that he should not be expelled. Whether he agreed or not, they were equally determined, they said, when their turn came, to defend the village; but if he would cast in his lot with them, they would, in defending him, gain the advantage of having the question settled three months sooner for themselves. Blue Peter sought to dissuade them, specially insisting on the danger of bloodshed. They laughed. They had anticipated objection, but being of the youngest and roughest in the place, the idea of a scrimmage was, neither in itself nor in its probable consequences, at all repulsive to them. They answered that a little blood-letting would do nobody any harm, neither would there be much of that, for they scorned to use any weapon sharper than their fists or a good thick *rung:* the women and children would take stones of course. Nobody would be killed, but every meddlesome authority taught to let Scaurnose and fishers alone. Peter objected that their enemies could easily starve them out. Dubs rejoined that, if they took care to keep the sea-door open, their friends at Portlossie would not let them starve. Grosert said he made no doubt the factor would have the Seaton to fight as well as Scaurnose, for they must see plainly enough that their turn would come next. Joseph said the factor would apply to the magistrates, and they would call out the militia.

"An' we'll call out Buckie," answered Dubs.

"Man," said Fite Folp, the eldest of the three, "the haill shore, frae the Brough to Fort George, 'll be up in a jiffie, an' a' the cuintry, frae John o' Groat's to Berwick, 'ill hear hoo the fisher-fowk 's misguidit; an' at last it'll come to the king, an' *syne* we'll get oor richts, for he'll no stan' to see't, an' maitters 'll sune be set upon a better futtin' for puir fowk 'at has no freen' but God an' the sea."

The greatness of the result represented laid hold of Peter's imagination, and the resistance to injustice necessary to reach it stirred the old tar in him. When they took their leave, he walked halfway up the street with them, and then returned to tell his wife what they had been saying, all the way murmuring to himself as he went, "The Lord is a man of war." And ever as he said the words, he saw as in a vision the great man-of-war in which he had served, sweeping across the bows of a Frenchman, and raking him, gun after gun, from stem to stern. Nor did the warlike mood abate until he reached home and looked his wife in the eyes. He told her all, ending with the half-repudiatory, half-tentative words.

"That's what they say, ye see, Annie."

"And what say ye, Joseph?" returned his wife.

"Ow! I'm no sayin'," he answered.

"What are ye thinkin' than, Joseph?" she pursued. "Ye canna say ye're no thinkin'."

"Na; I'll no say that, lass," he replied, but said no more.

"Weel, gien ye winna say," resumed Annie, "I wull; an' my say is, 'at it luiks to me unco like takin' things intil yer ain han'."

"An' whase han' sud we tak them intil but oor ain?" said Peter, with a falseness which in another would have roused his righteous indignation.

"That's no the p'int. It's whase han' ye're takin' them oot o'," returned she, and spoke with solemnity and significance.

Peter made no answer, but the words *Vengeance is mine* began to ring in his mental ears instead of *The Lord is a man of war.*

Before Mr Graham left them, and while Peter's soul was flourishing, he would have simply said that it was their part to endure, and leave the rest to the God of the sparrows. But now the words of men whose judgment had no weight with him, threw him back upon the instinct of self-defence—driven from which by the words of his wife, he betook himself, not alas! to the protection, but to the vengeance of the Lord!

The next day he told the three commissioners that he was sorry to disappoint them, but he could not make common cause with them, for he could not see it his duty to resist, much as it would gratify the natural man. They must therefore excuse him if he left Scaurnose at the time appointed. He hoped he should leave friends behind him.

They listened respectfully, showed no offence, and did not even attempt to argue the matter with him. But certain looks passed between them.

After this Blue Peter was a little happier in his mind, and went more briskly about his affairs.

## CHAPTER LV.

### THE WANDERER.

It was a lovely summer evening, and the sun, going down just beyond the point of the Scaurnose, shone straight upon the Partan's door. That it was closed in such weather had a significance—general as well as individual. Doors were oftener closed in the Seaton now. The spiritual atmosphere of the place was less clear and open than hitherto. The behaviour of the factor, the trouble of their neighbours, the conviction that the man who depopulated Scaurnose would at least raise the rents upon them, had brought a cloud over the feelings and prospects of its inhabitants—which their special quarrel with the oppressor for Malcolm's sake, had drawn deeper around the Findlays; and hence it was that the setting sun shone upon the closed door of their cottage.

But a shadow darkened it, cutting off the level stream of rosy red. An aged man, in Highland garments, stood and knocked. His overworn dress looked fresher and brighter in the friendly rays, but they shone very yellow on the bare hollows of his old knees. It was Duncan MacPhail, the supposed grandfather of Malcolm. He was older and feebler, I had almost said blinder, but that could not be, certainly shabbier than ever. The glitter of dirk and broadsword at his sides, and the many-coloured ribbons adorning the old bagpipes under his arms, somehow enhanced the look of more than autumnal, of wintry desolation in his appearance. Before he left the Seaton, the staff he carried was for show rather than use, but now he was bent over it, as if but for it he would fall into his grave. His knock was feeble and doubtful, as if unsure of a welcoming response. He was broken, sad, and uncomforted.

A moment passed. The door was unlatched, and within stood the Partaness, wiping her hands in her apron, and looking thunderous. But when she saw who it was, her countenance and manner changed utterly.

"Preserve's a'! Ye're a sicht for sair e'en, Maister MacPhail!" she cried, holding out her hand, which the blind man took as if he saw as well as she. "Come awa' but the hoose. Wow! but ye're walcome."

"She thanks your own self, Mistress Partan," said Duncan, as he followed her in; "and her heart will pe thanking you for ta coot welcome; and it will pe a long time since she'll saw you howefer."

"Noo, noo!" exclaimed Meg, stopping in the middle of her little kitchen, as she was getting a chair for the old man, and turning upon him to revive on the first possible chance what had been a standing quarrel between them, "what *can* be the rizon 'at gars ane like you, 'at never saw man or wuman i' yer lang life, the verra meenute ye open yer mou', say it's lang sin' ye *saw* me. A mensefu' body like you, Maister MacPhail, sud speyk mair to the p'int."

"Ton't you'll pe preaking her heart with ta one hand while you'll pe clapping her head with ta other," said the piper. "Ton't be taking her into your house to pe telling her she can't see. Is it that old Tuncan is not a man as much as any woman in ta world, tat you'll pe telling her she can't see? I tell you she *can* see, and more tan you'll pe think. And I will tell it to you, tere iss a pape in this house, and tere was pe none when Tuncan she'll co away."

"We a' ken ye ha'e the *second* sicht," said Mrs Findlay, who had not expected such a reply; "an' it was only o' the first I spak. Haith! it wad be ill set o' me to anger ye the moment ye come back to yer ain. Sit ye doon there by the chimla-neuk, till I mask ye a dish o' tay. Or maybe ye wad prefar a drap o' parritch an' milk? It's no muckle I ha'e to offer ye, but ye cudna be mair walcome."

As easily appeased as irritated, the old man sat down with a grateful, placid look, and while the tea was *drawing*, Mrs Findlay, by judicious questions, gathered from him the history of his adventures.

Unable to rise above the disappointment and chagrin of finding that the boy he loved as his own soul, and had brought up as his own son was actually the child of a Campbell woman, one of the race to which belonged the murderer of his people in Glencoe, and which therefore he hated with an absolute passion of hatred, unable also to endure the terrible schism in his being occasioned by the conflict between horror at the Campbell blood, and ineffaceable affection for the youth in whose veins it ran, and who so fully deserved all the love he had lavished upon him, he had concluded to rid himself of all the associations of place and people and event now grown so painful, to make his way back to his native Glencoe, and there endure his humiliation as best he might, beheld of the mountains which had beheld the ruin of his race. He would end the few and miserable days of his pilgrimage amid the rushing of the old torrents, and the calling of the old winds about the crags and precipices that had hung over his darksome yet blessed childhood. These were still his friends. But he had not gone many days' journey before a farmer found him on the road insensible, and took him home. As he recovered, his longing after his boy Malcolm grew, until it rose to agony, but he fought with his heart, and believed he had overcome it. The boy was a good boy, he said to himself; the boy had been to him as the son of his own heart; there was no fault to find with him or in him; he was as brave as he was kind, as sincere as he was clever, as strong as he was gentle; he could play on the bagpipes, and very nearly talk Gaelic; but his mother was a Campbell, and for that there was no help. To be on loving terms with one in whose veins ran a single drop of the black pollution was a thing no MacDhonuill must dream of He had lived a man of honour, and he would die a man of honour, hating the Campbells to their last generation. How should the bard of his clan ever talk to his own soul if he knew himself false to the name of his fathers! Hard fate for him! As if it were not enough that he had been doomed to save and rear a child of the brood abominable, he was yet further doomed, worst fate of all, to love the evil thing! he could not tear the lovely youth from his heart. But he could go further and further from him.

As soon as he was able, he resumed his journey westward, and at length reached his native glen, the wildest spot in all the island. There he found indeed the rush of the torrents and the call of the winds unchanged, but when his soul cried out in its agonies, they went on with the same song that had soothed his childhood; for the heart of the suffering man they had no response. Days passed before he came upon a creature who remembered him; for more than twenty years were gone, and a new generation had come up since he forsook the glen. Worst of all, the clan-spirit was dying out, the family type of government all but extinct, the patriarchal vanishing in a low form of the feudal, itself already in abject decay. The hour of the Celt was gone by, and the long-wandering raven, returning at last, found the ark it had left afloat on the waters dry and deserted and rotting to dust. There was not even a cottage in which he could hide his head. The one he had forsaken when cruelty and crime drove him out, had fallen to ruins, and now there was nothing of it left but its foundations. The people of the inn at the mouth of the valley did their best for him, but he learned by accident that they had Campbell connections, and, rising that instant, walked from it for ever. He wandered about for a time, playing his pipes, and everywhere hospitably treated; but at length his heart could endure its hunger no more: he *must* see his boy, or die. He walked therefore straight to the cottage of his quarrelsome but true friend, Mrs Partan—to learn that his benefactor, the marquis, was dead, and Malcolm gone. But here alone could he hope ever to see him again, and the same night he sought his cottage in the grounds of Lossie House, never doubting his right to re-occupy it. But the door was locked, and he could find no entrance. He went to the House, and there was referred to the factor. But when he knocked at his door, and requested the key of the cottage, Mr Crathie, who was in the middle of his third tumbler, came raging out of his dining-room, cursed him for an old Highland goat, and heaped insults on him and his grandson indiscriminately. It was well he kept the door between him and the old man, for otherwise he would never have finished the said third tumbler. That door carried in it thenceforth the marks of every weapon that Duncan bore, and indeed the half of his sgian dhu was the next morning found sticking in it, like the sting which the bee is doomed to leave behind her. He returned to Mistress Partan white and trembling, in a mountainous rage with "ta low-pred hount of a factor." Her sympathy was enthusiastic, for they shared a common wrath. And now came the tale of the factor's cruelty to the fishers, his hatred of Malcolm, and his general wildness of behaviour. The piper vowed to shed the last drop of his blood in defence of his Mistress Partan. But when, to strengthen the force of his asseveration, he drew the dangerous-looking dirk from its sheath, she threw herself upon him, wrenched it from his hand, and testified that "fules sudna hae chappin'-sticks, nor yet teylors guns." It was days before Duncan discovered where she had hidden it. But not the less heartily did she insist on his taking up his abode with her; and the very next day he resumed his old profession of lamp-cleaner to the community.

When Miss Horn heard that he had come and where he was, old feud with Meg Partan rendering it imprudent to call upon him, she watched for him in the street, and welcomed him home, assuring him that, if ever he should wish to change his quarters, her house was at his service.

"I'm nae Cam'ell, ye ken, Duncan," she concluded, "an' what an auld wuman like mysel' can du to mak ye coamfortable sall no fail, an' that I promise ye."

The old man thanked her with the perfect courtesy of the Celt, confessed that he was not altogether at ease where he was, but said he must not hurt the feelings of Mistress Partan, "for she'll not pe a paad womans," he added, "but her house will pe aalways in ta flames, howefer."

So he remained where he was, and the general heart of the Seaton was not a little revived by the return of one whose presence reminded them of a better time, when no such cloud as now threatened them heaved its ragged sides above their horizon.

The factor was foolish enough to attempt inducing Meg to send her guest away.

"We want no landloupin' knaves, old or young, about Lossie," he said. "If the place is no keepit dacent, we'll never get the young marchioness to come near's again."

"'Deed, factor," returned Meg, enhancing the force of her utterance by a composure marvellous from it's rarity, "the first thing to mak' the place—I'll no say dacent, sae lang there's sae mony claverin' wives in't, but mair dacent nor it has been for the last ten year, wad be to sen' factors back whaur they cam' frae."

"And whaur may that be?" asked Mr Crathie.

"That's mair nor I richtly can say," answered Meg Partan, "but auld-farand fouk threepit it was somewhaur 'ithin the swing o' Sawtan's tail."

The reply on the factor's lips as he left the house, tended to justify the rude sarcasm.

## CHAPTER LVI.

### MID-OCEAN.

THERE came a breath of something in the east. It was neither wind nor warmth. It was light before it is light to the eyes of men. Slowly and slowly it grew, until, like the dawning soul in the face of one who lies in a faint, the life of light came back to the world, and at last the whole huge hollow hemisphere of rushing sea and cloud-flecked sky lay like a great empty heart, waiting, in conscious glory of the light, for the central glory, the coming lord of day. And in the whole crystaline hollow, gleaming and flowing with delight, yet waiting for more, the Psyche was the only lonely life-bearing thing—the one cloudy germ-spot afloat in the bosom of the great roc-egg of sea and sky, whose sheltering nest was the universe with its walls of flame.

Florimel woke, rose, went on deck, and for a moment was fresh born. It was a fore-scent—even this could not be called a foretaste, of the kingdom of heaven; but Florimel never thought of the kingdom of heaven, the ideal of her own existence. She could however half appreciate this earthly outbreak of its glory, this incarnation of truth invisible. Round her, like a thousand doves, clamoured with greeting wings the joyous sea-wind. Up came a thousand dancing billows, to shout their good morning. Like a petted animal, importunate for play, the breeze tossed her hair and dragged at her fluttering garments, then rushed in the Psyche's sails, swelled them yet deeper, and sent her dancing over the dancers. The sun peered up like a mother waking and looking out on her frolicking children. Black shadows fell from sail to sail, slipping and shifting, and one long shadow of the Psyche herself shot over the world to the very gates of the west, but held her not, for she danced and leaned and flew as if she had but just begun her corantolavolta fresh with the morning, and had not been dancing all the livelong night over the same floor. Lively as any new-born butterfly, not like a butterfly's, flitting and howering, was her flight, for still, like one that longed, she sped and strained and flew. The joy of bare life swelled in Florimel's bosom. She looked up, she looked around, she breathed deep. The cloudy anger that had rushed upon her like a watching tiger the moment she waked, fell back, and left her soul a clear mirror to reflect God's dream of a world. She turned, and saw Malcolm at the tiller, and the cloudy wrath sprang upon her. He stood composed and clear and cool as the morning, without sign of doubt or conscience of wrong, now peeping into the binnacle, now glancing at the sunny sails, where swayed across and back the dark shadows of the rigging, as the cutter leaned and rose, like a child running and staggering over the multitudinous and unstable hillocks. She turned from him.

"Good morning, my lady! What a good morning it is!" As in all his address to his mistress, the freedom of the words did not infect the tone; that was resonant of essential honour. "Strange to think," he went on, "that the sun himself there is only a great fire, and knows nothing about it! There must be a sun to that sun, or the whole thing is a vain show. There must be one to whom each is itself, yet the all makes a whole—one who is at once both centre and circumference to all."

Florimel cast on him a scornful look. For not merely was he talking his usual unintelligible rubbish of poetry, but he had the impertinence to speak as if he had done nothing amiss, and she had no ground for being offended with him. She made him no answer. A cloud came over Malcolm's face; and until she went again below, he gave his attention to his steering.

In the meantime Rose, who happily had turned out as good a sailor as her new mistress, had tidied the little cabin; and Florimel found, if not quite such a sumptuous breakfast laid as at Portland Place, yet a far better appetite than usual to meet what there was; and when she had finished, her temper was better, and she was inclined to think less indignantly of Malcolm's share in causing her so great a pleasure. She was not yet quite spoiled. She was still such a lover of the visible world and of personal freedom, that the thought of returning to London and its leaden-footed hours, would now have been unendurable. At this moment she could have imagined no better thing than thus to go tearing through the water—home to her home. For although she had spent little of her life at Lossie House, she could not but prefer it unspeakably to the schools in which she had passed almost the whole of the preceding portion of it. There was little or nothing in the affair she could have wished otherwise except its origin. She was mischievous enough to enjoy even the thought of the consternation it would cause at Portland Place. She did not realize all its awkwardness. A letter to Lady Bellair when she reached home would, she said to herself, set everything right; and if Malcolm had now repented and put about, she would instantly have ordered him to hold on for Lossie. But it was mortifying that she should have come at the will of Malcolm, and not by her own—worse than mortifying that perhaps she would have to say so. If she were going to say so, she must turn him away as soon as she arrived. There was no help for it. She dared not keep him after that in the face of society. But she might take the bold, and perhaps a little dangerous measure of adopting the flight as altogether her own madcap idea. Her thoughts went floundering in the bog of expediency, until she was tired, and declined from thought to reverie. Then dawning out of the dreamland of her past, appeared the image of Lenorme. Pure pleasure, glorious delight, such as she now felt, could not long possess her mind, without raising in its charmed circle the vision of the only man except her father whom she had ever—something like loved. Her behaviour to him had not yet roused in her shame or sorrow or sense of wrong. She had driven him from her; she was ashamed of her relation to him; she had caused him bitter suffering; she had all but promised to marry another man; yet she had not the slightest wish for that man's company there and then: with no one of her acquaintaince but Lenorme could she have shared this conscious splendour of life. "Would to God he had been born a gentleman instead of a painter!" she said to herself, when her imagination had brought him from the past, and set him in the midst of the present. "Rank," she said, "I am above caring about. In that he might be ever so far my inferior, and welcome, if only he had been of a good family, a gentleman born!" She was generosity, magnanimity itself, in her own eyes! Yet he was of far better family than she knew, for she had never taken the trouble to inquire into his history. And now she was so much easier in her mind since she had so cruelly broken with him, that she felt positively virtuous because she had done it, and he was not at that moment by her side. And yet if he had that moment stepped from behind the mainsail, she would in all probability have thrown herself into his arms.

The day passed on: Florimel grew tired and went to sleep; woke and had her dinner; took a volume of the "Arabian Nights," and read herself again to sleep; woke again; went on deck; saw the sun growing weary in the west. And still the unwearied wind blew, and still the Psyche danced on, as unwearied as the wind.

The sun-set was rather an assumption than a decease, a reception of him out of their sight into an eternity of gold and crimson; and when he was gone, and the gorgeous bliss had withered into a dove-hued grief, then the cool, soft twilight, thoughtful of the past and its love, crept out of the western caves over the breast of the water, and filled the dome and made of itself a great lens royal, through which the stars and their motions were visible; and the ghost of Aurora with both hands lifted her shroud above her head and made a dawn for the moon on the verge of the watery horizon—a dawn as of the past, the hour of inverted hope. Not a word all day had been uttered between Malcolm and his mistress: when the moon appeared, with the waves sweeping up against her face, he approached Florimel where she sat in the stern. Davy was steering.

"Will your ladyship come forward and see how the Psyche goes?" he said. "At the stern, you can see only the passive part of her motion. It is quite another thing to see the will of her at work in the bows."

At first she was going to refuse; but she changed her mind, or her mind changed her: she was not much more of a living and acting creature yet than the Psyche herself. She said nothing, but rose, and permitted Malcolm to help her forward.

It was the moon's turn now to be level with the water, and as Florimel stood on the larboard side, leaning over and gazing down, she saw her shine through the little feather of spray the cutwater sent curling up before it, and turn it into pearls and semiopals.

"She's got a bone in her mouth, you see, my lady," said old Travers.

"Go aft till I call you, Travers," said Malcolm.

Rose was in Florimel's cabin, and they were now quite alone.

"My lady," said Malcolm, "I can't bear to have you angry with me."

"Then you ought not to deserve it," returned Florimel.

"My lady, if you knew all, you would not say I deserved it."

"Tell me all then, and let me judge."

"I cannot tell you all yet, but I will tell you something which may perhaps incline you to feel merciful. Did your ladyship ever think what could make me so much attached to your father?"

"No indeed. I never saw anything peculiar in it. Even now-a-days there are servants to be found who love their masters. It seems to me natural enough. Besides he was very kind to you."

"It was natural indeed, my lady—more natural than you think. Kind to me he was, and that was natural too."

"Natural to him, no doubt, for he was kind to everybody."

"My grandfather told you something of my early history—did he not my lady?"

"Yes—at least I think I remember his doing so."

"Will you recall it, and see whether it suggests nothing."

But Florimel could remember nothing in particular, she said. She had in truth, for as much as she was interested at the time, forgotten almost everything of the story.

"I really cannot think what you mean," she added. "If you are going to be mysterious, I shall resume my place by the tiller. Travers is deaf, and Davy is dumb: I prefer either."

"My lady," said Malcolm, "your father knew my mother, and persuaded her that he loved her."

Florimel drew herself up, and would have looked him to ashes if wrath could burn. Malcolm saw he must come to the point at once or the parley would cease.

"My lady," he said, "your father was my father too. I am a son of the Marquis of Lossie, and your brother—your ladyship's half-brother, that is."

She looked a little stunned. The gleam died out of her eyes, and the glow out of her cheek. She turned and leaned over the bulwark. He said no more, but stood watching her. She raised herself suddenly, looked at him, and said,

"Do I understand you?"

"I am your brother," Malcolm repeated.

She made a step forward, and held out her hand. He took the little thing in his great grasp tenderly. Her lip trembled. She gazed at him for an instant, full in the face, with a womanly, believing expression.

"My poor Malcolm!" she said, "I am sorry for you."

She withdrew her hand, and again leaned over the bulwark. Her heart was softened towards her groom-brother, and for a moment it seemed to her that some wrong had been done. Why should the one be a marchioness and the other a groom? Then came the thought that now all was explained. Every peculiarity of the young man, every gift extraordinary of body, mind, or spirit, his strength, his beauty, his courage, and honesty, his simplicity, nobleness, and affection, yes, even what in *him* was mere doggedness and presumption, all, everything explained itself to Florimel in the fact that the incomprehensible fisherman-groom, that talked like a parson, was the son of her father. She never thought of the woman that was his mother, and what share she might happen to have in the phenomenon—thought only of her father, and a little pitifully of the half-honour and more than half-disgrace infolding the very existence of her attendant. As usual her thoughts were confused. The one moment the poor fellow seemed to exist only on sufferance, having no right to be there at all, for as fine a fellow as he was; the next she thought how immeasurably he was indebted to the family of the Colonsays. Then arose the remembrance of his arrogance and presumption in assuming on such a ground something more than guardianship—absolute tyranny over her, and with the thought pride and injury at once got the upper hand. Was *she* to be dictated to by a low-born, low-bred fellow like that—a fellow whose hands were harder than any leather, not with doing things for his amusement but actually with earning his daily bread—one that used to smell so of fish—on the ground of right too—and such a right as ought to exclude him for ever from her presence!—She turned to him again.

"How long have you known this—this—painful—indeed I must confess to finding it an awkward and embarrassing fact? I presume you *do* know it?" she said, coldly and searchingly.

"My father confessed it on his death-bed."

"Confessed!" echoed Florimel's pride, but she restrained her tongue.

"It explains much," she said, with a sort of judicial relief. "There has been a great change upon you since then. Mind I only say *explains*. It could never justify such behaviour as yours—no, not if you had been my true brother. There is some excuse, I daresay, to be made for your ignorance and inexperience. No doubt the discovery turned your head. Still I am at a loss to understand how you could imagine that sort of—of—that sort of thing gave you any right over me!"

"Love has its rights, my lady," said Malcolm.

Again her eyes flashed and her cheek flushed. "I cannot permit you to talk so to me. You must not fancy such things are looked upon in our position with the same indifference as in yours. You must not flatter yourself that you can be allowed to cherish the same feelings towards me as if—as if—you were really my brother. I am sorry for you, Malcolm, as I said already; but you have altogether missed your mark if you think that can alter facts, or shelter you from the consequences of presumption."

Again she turned away. Malcolm's heart was sore for her. How grievously she had sunk from the Lady Florimel of the old days! It was all from being so constantly with that wretched woman and her vile nephew. Had he been able to foresee such a rapid declension, he would have taken her away long ago, and let come of her feelings what might. He had been too careful over them.

"Indeed," Florimel resumed, but this time without turning towards him, "I do not see how things can possibly, after what you have told me, remain as they are. I should not feel at all comfortable in having one about me who would be constantly supposing he had rights, and reflecting on my father for fancied injustice, and whom I fear nothing could prevent from taking liberties. It is very awkward indeed, Malcolm—very awkward! But it is your own fault that you are so changed, and I must say I should not have expected it of you. I should have thought you had more good sense and regard for me. If I were to tell the world why I wanted to keep you, people would but shrug their shoulders and tell me to get rid of you; and if I said nothing, there would always be something coming up that required explanation. Besides, you would for ever be trying to convert me to one or other of your foolish notions. I hardly know what to do. I will consult—my friends on the subject. And yet I would rather they knew nothing of it. My father you see——" She paused. "If you had been my real brother it would have been different."

"I am your real brother, my lady, and I have tried to behave like one ever since I knew it."

"Yes; you have been troublesome. I have always understood that brothers were troublesome. I am told they are given to taking upon them the charge of their sisters conduct. But I would not have even you think me heartless. If you had been a *real* brother, of course I should have treated you differently."

"I don't doubt it, my lady, for everything would have been different then. I should have been the Marquis of Lossie, and you would have been Lady Florimel Colonsay. But it would have made little difference in one thing: I could not have loved you better than I do now—if only you would believe it, my lady!"

The emotion of Malcolm, evident in his voice as he said this, seemed to touch her a little.

"I believe it, my poor Malcolm," she returned, "quite as much as I want, or as it is pleasant to believe it. I think you would do a great deal for me, Malcolm. But then you are so rude! take things into your hands, and do things for me I don't want done! You *will* judge, not only for yourself, but for me! How *can* a man of your training and position judge for a lady of mine! Don't you see the absurdity of it? At times it has been very awkward indeed. Perhaps when I am married it might be arranged; but I don't know." Here Malcolm ground his teeth, but was otherwise irresponsive as block of stone. "How would a gamekeeper's place suit you. That is a half-gentlemanly kind of post. I will speak to the factor, and see what can be done.—But on the whole I *think*, Malcolm, it will be better you should go. I am *very* sorry. I wish you had not told me. It is very painful to me. You *should* not have told me. These things are not intended to be talked of.—Suppose you were to marry—say——"

She stopped abruptly, and it was well both for herself and Malcolm that she caught back the name that was on her lips.

The poor girl must not be judged as if she had been more than a girl, or other than one with every disadvantage of evil training. Had she been four or five years older, she might have been a good deal worse, and have seemed better, for she would have kept much of what she had now said to herself, and would perhaps have treated her brother more kindly while she cared even less for him.

"What will you do with Kelpie, my lady?" asked Malcolm quietly.

"There it is, you see!" she returned. "So awkward! If you had not told me, things could have gone on as before, and for your sake I could have pretended I came this voyage of my own will and pleasure. Now, I don't know what I can do—except indeed you—let me see—if you were to hold your tongue, and tell nobody what you have just told me—I don't know but you might stay till you got her so far trained that another man could manage her. I might even be able to ride her myself.—Will you promise?"

"I will promise not to let the fact come out so long as I am in your service, my lady."

"After all that has passed, I think you might promise me a little more! But I will not press it."

"May I ask what it is, my lady?"

"I am not going to press it, for I do not choose to make a favour of it. Still, I do not see that it would be such a mighty favour to ask—of one who owes respect at least to the house of Lossie. But I will not ask. I will only *suggest*, Malcolm, that you should leave this part of the country—say this country altogether, and go to America, or New South Wales, or the Cape of Good Hope. If you will take the hint, and promise never to speak a word of this unfortunate—yes, I must be honest, and allow there is a *sort* of relationship between us; but if you will keep it secret, I will take care that something is done for you—something, I mean, more than you could have any right to expect. And mind, I am not asking you to conceal anything that could reflect honour upon you or dishonour upon us."

"I cannot, my lady."

"I scarcely thought you would. Only you hold such grand ideas about self-denial, that I thought it might be agreeable to you to have an opportunity of exercising the virtue at a small expense and a great advantage."

Malcolm was miserable. Who could have dreamed to find in her such a woman of the world! He must break off the hopeless interview.

"Then, my lady," he said, "I suppose I am to give my chief attention to Kelpie, and things are to be as they have been."

"For the present. And as to this last piece of presumption, I will so far forgive you as to take the proceeding on myself—mainly because it would have been my very choice had you submitted it to me. There is nothing I should have preferred to a sea-voyage and returning to Lossie at this time of the year.

But you also must be silent on your insufferable share in the business. And for the other matter, the least arrogance or assumption I shall consider to absolve me at once from all obligation towards you of any sort. Such relationships are *never* acknowledged."

"Thank you—sister," said Malcolm—a last forlorn experiment; and as he said the word he looked lovingly in her eyes.

She drew herself up like the princess Lucifera, "with loftie eyes, halfe loth to looke so lowe," and said, cold as ice,

"If once I hear that word on your lips again, as between you and me, Malcolm, I shall that very moment discharge you from my service, as for a misdemeanour. You have *no* claim upon me, and the world will not blame me."

"Certainly not, my lady. I beg your pardon. But there is one who perhaps will blame you a little."

"I know what you mean; but I don't pretend to any of your religious motives. When I do, then you may bring them to bear upon me."

"I was not so foolish as you think me, my lady. I merely imagined you might be as far on as a Chinaman," said Malcolm, with a poor attempt at a smile.

"What insolence do you intend now?"

"The Chinese, my lady, pay the highest respect to their departed parents. When I said there was one who would blame you a little, I meant your father."

He touched his cap, and withdrew.

"Send Rose to me," Florimel called after him, and presently with her went down to the cabin.

And still the Psyche soul-like flew. Her earthly birth held her to the earth, but the ocean upbore her, and the breath of God drove her on. Little thought Florimel to what she hurried her! A queen in her own self-sufficiency and condescension, she could not suspect how little of real queendom, noble and self-sustaining, there was in her being; for not a soul of man or woman whose every atom leans not upon its father-fact in God, can sustain itself when the outer wall of things begins to tumble towards the centre, crushing it in on every side.

During the voyage no further allusion was made by either to what had passed. By the next morning Florimel had yet again recovered her temper, and, nothing fresh occurring to irritate her, kept it and was kind.

Malcolm was only too glad to accept whatever parings of heart she might offer.

By the time their flight was over, Florimel almost felt as if it had indeed been undertaken at her own desire and motion, and was quite prepared to assert that such was the fact.

## CHAPTER LVII.

### THE SHORE.

It was two days after the longest day of the year, when there is no night in those regions, only a long twilight, in which many dream and do not know it. There had been a week of variable weather, with sudden changes of wind to east and north, and round again by south to west, and then there had been a calm for several days. But now the little wind there was blew from the north-east; and the fervour of June was rendered more delicious by the films of flavouring cold that floated through the mass of heat. All Portlossie more and less, the Seaton especially, was in a state of excitement, for its little neighbour, Scaurnose, was more excited still. There the man most threatened, and with greatest injustice, was the only one calm amongst the men, and amongst the women his wife was the only one that was calmer than he. Blue Peter was resolved to abide the stroke of wrong, and not resist the powers that were, believing them in some true sense, which he found it hard to understand when he thought of the factor as the individual instance, ordained of God. He had a dim perception too that it was better that one, that one he, should suffer, than that order should be destroyed and law defied. Suffering, he might still in patience possess his soul, and all be well with him; but what would become of the country if everyone wronged were to take the law into his own hands? Thousands more would be wronged by the lawless in a week than by unjust powers in a year. But the young men were determined to pursue their plan of resistance, and those of the older and soberer who saw the uselessness of it, gave themselves little trouble to change the minds of the rest. Peter, although he knew they were not for peace, neither inquired what their purpose might be, nor allowed any conjecture or suspicion concerning it to influence him in his preparations for departure. Not that he had found a new home. Indeed he had not heartily set about searching for one; in part because, unconsciously to himself, he was buoyed up by the hope he read so clear in the face of his more trusting wife—that Malcolm would come to deliver them. His plan was to leave her and his children with certain friends at Port Gordon; he would not hear of going to the Partans to bring them into trouble. He would himself set out immediately after for the Lewis fishing.

Few had gone to the Hebrides that year from Scaurnose or Portlossie. The magnitude of the events that were about to take place, yet more the excitement and interest they occasioned, kept the most of the men at home—to content themselves with fishing the waters of the Moray Frith. And they had notable success. But what was success with such a tyrant over them as the factor, threatening to harry their nests, and turn the sea-birds and their young out of their heritage of rock and sand and shingle? They could not keep house on the waves, any more than the gulls! Those who still held their religious assemblies in the cave called the Baillies' Barn, met often, read and sang the comminatory psalms more than any others, and prayed much against the wiles and force of their enemies both temporal and spiritual; while Mr Crathie went every Sunday to Church, grew redder in the nose, and hotter in the temper.

Miss Horn was growing more and more uncomfortable concerning events, and dissatisfied with Malcolm. She had not for some time heard from him, and here was his most important duty unattended to—she would not yet say neglected—the well-being of his tenantry, namely, left in the hands of an unsympathetic, self-important underling, who was fast losing all the good sense he had once possessed! Was the life and history of all these brave fishermen and their wives and children to be postponed to the pampered feelings of one girl, and that because she was what she had no right to be, his half-sister forsooth? said Miss Horn to herself—that bosom friend to whom some people, and those not the worst, say oftener what they do not mean than what they do. She had written to him within the last month a very hot letter indeed, which had afforded no end of amusement to Mrs Catanach, as she sat in his old lodging over the curiosity shop, but, I need hardly say, had not reached Malcolm: and now there was but one night, and the best of all the fisher-families would have nowhere to lie down! Miss Horn, with Joseph Mair, thought she did well to be angry with Malcolm.

The blind piper had been very restless all day. Questioned again and again by Meg Partan as to what was amiss with him, he had always returned her odd and evasive answers. Every few minutes he got up—even from cleaning her lamp—to go to the shore. He had but to cross the threshold, and take a few steps through the *close*, to reach the road that ran along the sea-front of the village: on the one side were the cottages, scattered and huddled, on the other the shore and ocean wide outstretched. He would walk straight across this road until he felt the sand under his feet; there stand for a few moments facing the sea, and, with nostrils distended, breathing deep breaths of the air from the north-east; then turn and walk back to Meg Partan's kitchen, to resume his ministration of light. These his sallies were so frequent, and his absences so short, that a more serene temper than hers might have been fretted by them. But there was something about his look and behaviour that, while it perplexed, restrained her; and instead of breaking out upon him, she eyed him curiously. She had found that it would not do to stare at him. The instant she began to do so, he began to fidget, and turned his back to her. It had made her lose her temper for a moment, and declare aloud as her conviction that he was after all an impostor, and saw as well as any of them.

"She has told you so, Mistress Partan, one hundred thousand times," replied Duncan with an odd smile: "and perhaps she will pe see a little petter as any of you, no matter."

Thereupon she murmured to herself, "The cratur 'ill be seein' something!" and with mingled awe and curiosity sought to lay restraint upon her unwelcome observation of him.

Thus it went on the whole day, and as the evening approached, he grew still more excited. The sun went down, and the twilight began; and, as the twilight deepened, still his excitement grew. Straightway it seemed as if the whole Seaton had come to share in it. Men and women were all out of doors; and, late as it was when the sun set, to judge by the number of red legs and feet that trotted in and out with a little shadowy flash, with a dull patter-pat on earthen floor and hard road, and a scratching and hustling among the pebbles, there could not have been one older than a baby in bed; while of the babies even not a few were awake in their mothers' arms, and out with them on the sea front. The men, with their hands in their trouser-pockets, were lazily smoking pigtail, in short-clay pipes with tin covers fastened to the stems by little chains, and some of the women, in short blue petticoats and worsted stockings, doing the same. Some stood in their doors, talking with neighbours standing in their doors; but these were mostly the elder women: the younger ones—all but Lizzy Findlay—were out in the road. One man half leaned, half sat on the window-sill of Duncan's former abode, and round him were two or three more, and some women, talking about Scaurnose, and the factor.

and what the lads would do to-morrow; while the hush of the sea on the pebbles mingled with their talk, like an unknown tongue of the infinite—never articulating, only suggesting—uttering in song and not in speech—dealing not with thoughts, but with feelings and foretastes. No one listened: what to them was the Infinite with Scaurnose in the near distance! It was now almost as dark as it would be throughout the night if it kept as clear.

Once more there was Duncan, standing as if looking out to sea, and shading his brows with his hand as if to protect his eyes from the glare of the sun, and enable his sight!

"There's the auld piper again!" said one of the group, a young woman. "He's unco fule like to be stan'in that gait (*way*), makin' as gien he cudna weel see for the sun in 's e'en."

"Haud ye yer tongue, lass," rejoined an elderly woman beside her. "There's mair things nor ye ken, as the Beuk says. There's een 'at can see an' een 'at canna, an' een 'at can see twise ower, an' een 'at can see steikit what nane can see open."

"Ta poat! ta poat of my chief!" cried the seer. "She is coming like a tream of ta night, put one tat will not tepart with ta morning."

He spoke as one suppressing a wild joy.

"Wha'll that be, lucky-deddy (*grandfather*)?" inquired, in a respectful voice, the woman who had last spoken, while those within hearing hushed each other and stood in silence. And all the time the ghost of the day was creeping round from west to east to put on its resurrection body, and rise new born. It gleamed faint like a cold ashy fire in the north.

"And who will it pe than her own son, Mistress Reekie?" answered the piper, calling her by her husband's nickname, as was usual, but, as was his sole wont, prefixing the title of respect, where custom would have employed but her Christian name.

"Who'll should it pe put her own Malcolm?" he went on. "I see his poat come round ta Tead Head. She flits over the water like a pale ghost over Morven. But it's ta young and ta strong she is pringing home to Tuncan. O m'anam, beannuich!"

Involuntarily all eyes turned towards the point called the Death's Head, which bounded the bay on the east.

"It's ower dark to see onything," said the man on the window-sill. "There's a bit haar (*fog*) come up."

"Yes," said Duncan, "it'll pe too tark for you who haf cot no eyes only to speak of. Put your'll wait a few, and you'll pe seeing as well as herself. Och, her poy! her poy! O m'anam! Ta Lort pe praised! and she'll tie in peace, for he'll pe only ta one half of him a Cam'ell, and he'll pe safed at last, as sure as there's a heafen to co to and a hell to co from. For ta half tat's not a Cam'ell must pe ta strong half, and it will trag ta other half into heafen—where it will not pe ta welcome, howefer."

As if to get rid of the unpleasant thought that his Malcolm could not enter heaven without taking half a Campbell with him, he turned from the sea and hurried into the house—but only to catch up his pipes and hasten out again, filling the bag as he went. Arrived once more on the verge of the sand, he stood again facing the north-east, and began to blow a pibroch loud and clear.

Meantime the Partan had joined the same group, and they were talking in a low tone about the piper's claim to the second sight, for, although all were more or less inclined to put faith in Duncan, there was here no such unquestioning belief in the marvel as would have been found on the west coast in every glen from the Mull of Cantyre to Loch Eribol—when suddenly Meg Partan, almost the only one hitherto remaining in the house, appeared rushing from the close.

"Hech, sirs!" she cried, addressing the Seaton in general, "gien the auld man be i' the richt,——"

"She'll pe aal in ta right, Mistress Partan, and tat you'll pe seeing," said Duncan, who, hearing her first cry, had stopped his drone, and played softly, listening.

But Meg went on without heeding him any more than was implied in the repetition of her exordium.

"Gien the auld man be i' the richt, it'll be the marchioness hersel' 'at's h'ard o' the ill duin's o' her factor, an's comin' to see efter her fowk! An' it'll be Ma'colm's duin', an' that'll be seen. But the bonny laad winna ken the state o' the herbour, an' he'll be makin' for the moo' o't, an' he'll jist rin 's bonny boatie agrun' 'atween the twa piers, an' that'll no be a richt hame-comin' for the leddy o' the lan', an' what's mair, Ma'colm 'ill get the wyte (*blame*) o' 't, an' that'll be seen. Sae ye maun some o' ye to the pier-heid, an' luik oot to gie 'im warnin'."

Her own husband was the first to start, proud of the foresight of his wife.

"Haith, Meg!" he cried, "ye're maist as guid at the lang sicht as the piper himsel'!"

Several followed him, and as they ran, Meg cried after them, giving her orders as if she had been vice-admiral of the red, in a voice shrill enough to pierce the worst gale that ever blew on northern shore.

"Ye'll jist tell the bonnie laad to haud wast a bit an' rin her ashore, an' we'll a' be there an' hae her as dry's Noah's ark in a jiffie. Tell her leddyship we'll cairry the boat, an' her intil't, to the tap o' the Boar's Tail, gien she'll gie's her orders.—Winna we, laads?"

"We can but try!" said one. "—But the Fisky 'ill be waur to get a grip o' nor Nancy here," he added, turning suddenly upon the plumpest girl in the place, who stood next to him. She foiled him however of the kiss he had thought to snatch, and turned the laugh from herself upon him, so cleverly avoiding his clutch that he staggered into the road, and nearly fell upon his nose.

By the time the Partan and his companions reached the pierhead, something was dawning in the vague of sea and sky that might be a sloop and standing for the harbour. Thereupon the Partan and Jamie Ladle jumped into a small boat and pulled out. Dubs, who had come from Scaurnose on the business of the conjuration, had stepped into the stern, not to steer but to show a white ensign—somebody's Sunday shirt he had gathered, as they ran, from a furze-bush, where it hung to dry, between the Seaton and the harbour.

"Hoots! ye'll affront the marchioness," objected the Partan.

"Man, i' the gloamin' she'll no ken 't frae buntin'," said Dubs, and at once displayed it, holding it by the two sleeves.

The wind had now fallen to the softest breath, and the little vessel came on slowly. The men rowed hard, shouting, and waving their flag, and soon heard a hail which none of them could mistake for other than Malcolm's. In a few minutes they were on board, greeting their old friend with jubilation, but talking in a subdued tone, for they perceived by Malcolm's that the cutter bore their lady. Briefly the Partan communicated the state of the harbour, and recommended porting his helm, and running the Fisky ashore about opposite the brass swivel.

"A' the men an' women i' the Seaton," he said, "'ill be there to haul her up."

Malcolm took the helm, gave his orders, and steered further westward. By this time the people on shore had caught sight of the cutter. They saw her come stealing out of the thin dark like a thought half thought, and go gliding along the shore like a sea-ghost over the dusky water, faint, uncertain, noiseless, glimmering. It could be no other than the Fisky! Both their lady and their friend Malcolm must be on board, they were certain, for how could the one of them come without the other? and doubtless the marchioness, whom they all remembered as a good-humoured handsome young lady, never shy of speaking to anybody, had come to deliver them from the hateful red-nosed ogre, her factor! Out at once they all set along the shore to greet her arrival, each running regardless of the rest, so that from the Seaton to the middle of the Boar's Tail there was a long, straggling broken string of hurrying fisherfolk, men and women, old and young, followed by all the current children, tapering to one or two toddlers, who felt themselves neglected and wept their way along. The piper, too asthmatic to run, but not too asthmatic to walk and play his bagpipes, delighting the heart of Malcolm, who could not mistake the style, believed he brought up the rear, but was wrong; for the very last came Mrs Findlay and Lizzy, carrying between them their little deal kitchen-table, for her ladyship to step out of the boat upon, and Lizzy's child fast asleep on the top of it.

The foremost ran and ran until they saw that the Psyche had chosen her couch, and was turning her head to the shore, when they stopped and stood ready with greased planks and ropes to draw her up. In a few moments the whole population was gathered, darkening, in the June midnight, the yellow sands between the tide and dune. The Psyche was well manned now with a crew of six. On she came under full sail till within a few yards of the beach, when, in one and the same moment, every sheet was let go, and she swept softly up like a summer wave, and lay still on the shore. The butterfly was asleep. But ere she came to rest, the instant indeed that her canvas went fluttering away, thirty strong men had rushed into the water and laid hold of the now broken-winged thing. In a few minutes she was high and dry.

Malcolm leaped on the sand just as the Partaness came bustling up with her kitchen-table between her two hands like a tray. She set it down, and across it shook hands with him violently; then caught it up and deposited it firm on its four legs beneath the cutter's waist.

"Noo, my leddy," said Meg, looking up at the marchioness, "set ye yer bit fut upo' my table, an' we'll think the mair o't efter whan we tak' oor denner aff o' 't."

Florimel thanked her, stepped lightly upon it, and sprang to the sand, where she was received with words of welcome from many, and shouts which rendered them inaudible from the rest. The men, their bonnets in their hands, and the women courtesying, made a lane for her to pass through, while the young fellows would gladly have begged leave to carry her, could they have extemporised any suitable sort of palanquin or triumphal litter.

Followed by Malcolm, she led the way over the Boar's Tail—nor would accept any help in climbing it—straight for the tunnel:

Malcolm had never laid aside the key to the private doors his father had given him while he was yet a servant. They crossed by the embrasure of the brass swivel. That implement had now long been silent, but they had not gone many paces from the bottom of the dune when it went off with a roar. The shouts of the people drowned the startled cry with which Florimel, involuntarily mindful of old and for her better times, turned to Malcolm. She had not looked for such a reception, and was both flattered and touched by it. For a brief space the spirit of her girlhood came back. Possibly, had she then understood that hope rather than faith or love was at the heart of their enthusiasm, that her tenants looked upon her as their saviour from the factor, and sorely needed the exercise of her sovereignty, she might have better understood her position, and her duty towards them.

Malcolm unlocked the door of the tunnel, and she entered, followed by Rose, who felt as if she were walking in a dream. As he stepped in after them, he was seized from behind, and clasped close in an embrace he knew at once.

"Daddy, daddy!" he said, and turning threw his arms round the piper.

"My poy! my poy! Her nain son Malcolm!" cried the old man in a whisper of intense satisfaction and suppression. "You'll must pe forgifing her for coming pack to you. She cannot help lofing you, and you must forget tat you are a Cam'ell."

Malcolm kissed his cheek, and said, also in a whisper:

"My ain daddy! I ha'e a heap to tell ye, but I maun see my leddy hame first."

"Co, co, this moment co," cried the old man, pushing him away. "To your tuties to my leddyship first, and then come to her old daddy."

"I'll be wi' ye in half an hoor or less."

"Coot poy! coot poy! Come to Mistress Partan's."

"Ay, ay, daddy!" said Malcolm, and hurried through the tunnel.

As Florimel approached the ancient dwelling of her race, now her own to do with as she would, her pleasure grew. Whether it was the twilight, or the breach in dulling custom, everything looked strange, the grounds wider, the trees larger, the house grander and more anciently venerable. And all the way the burn sang in the hollow. The spirit of her father seemed to hover about the place, and while the thought that her father's voice would not greet her when she entered the hall, cast a solemn funereal state over her simple return, her heart yet swelled with satisfaction and far-derived pride. All this was hers to work her pleasure with, to confer as she pleased! No thought of her tenants, fishers or farmers, who did their strong part in supporting the ancient dignity of her house, had even an associated share in the bliss of the moment. She had forgotten her reception already, or regarded it only as the natural homage to such a position and power as hers. As to owing anything in return, the idea had indeed been presented to her when with Clementina and Malcolm she talked over "St Ronan's Well," but it had never entered her mind.

The drawing-room and the hall were lighted. Mrs Courthope was at the door as if she expected her, and Florimel was careful to take everything as a matter of course.

"When will your ladyship please to want me?" asked Malcolm.

"At the usual hour, Malcolm," she answered.

He turned, and ran to the Seaton.

His first business was the accommodation of Travers and Davy, but he found them already housed at the Salmon, with Jamie Ladle teaching Travers to drink toddy. They had left the Psyche snug: she was high above high-water mark, and there were no tramps about; they had furled her sails, locked the companion-door, and left her.

Mrs Findlay rejoiced over Malcolm as if he had been her own son from a far country; but the poor piper between politeness and gratitude on the one hand, and the urging of his heart on the other, was sorely tried by her loquacity: he could hardly get in a word. Malcolm perceived his suffering, and, as soon as seemed prudent, proposed that he should walk with him to Miss Horn's, where he was going to sleep, he said, that night. Mrs Partan snuffed, but held her peace. For the third or fourth time that day, wonderful to tell, she restrained herself!

As soon as they were out of the house, Malcolm assured Duncan, to the old man's great satisfaction, that, had he not found him there, he would, within another month, have set out to roam Scotland in search of him.

Miss Horn had heard of their arrival, and was wandering about the house, unable even to sit down until she saw the marquis. To herself she always called him the marquis; to his face he was always *Ma'colm*. If he had not come, she declared she could not have gone to bed—yet she received him with an edge to her welcome: he had to answer for his behaviour. They sat down, and Duncan told a long sad story; which finished, with the toddy that had sustained him during the telling, the old man thought it better, for fear of annoying his Mistress Partan, to go home As it was past one o'clock, they both agreed.

"And if she'll tie to-night, my poy," said Duncan, "she'll pe lie awake in her crave all ta long tarkness, to pe waiting to hear ta voice of your worrts in ta morning. And nefer you mind, Malcolm, she'll has learned to forgife you for peing only ta one half of yourself a cursed Cam'ell."

Miss Horn gave Malcolm a wink, as much as to say, "Let the old man talk. It will hurt no Campbell," and showed him out with much attention. And then at last Malcolm poured forth his whole story, and his heart with it, to Miss Horn, who heard and received it with understanding, and a sympathy which grew ever as she listened. At length she declared herself perfectly satisfied, for not only had he done his best, but she did not see what else he could have done. She hoped, however, that now he would contrive to get this part over as quickly as possible, for which, in the morning, she would, she said, show him cogent reasons.

"I ha'e no feelin's mysel', as ye weel ken, laddie," she remarked in conclusion, "an' I doobt, gien I had been i' your place, I wad na hae luikit to a' sides o' the thing at ance as ye hae dune.—An' it was a man like you 'at sae near lost yer life for the hizzy!" she exclaimed. "I maunna think aboot it, or I winna sleep a wink. But we maun get that deevil Catanach (an' cat eneuch!) hangt. Weel, my man, ye may haud up yer heid afore the father o' ye, for ye're the first o' the race, I'm thinkin', 'at ever was nearhan' deein' for anither. But mak ye a speedy en' till 't noo, laad, an' fa' to the lave o' yer wark. There's a terrible heap to be dune. But I maun haud my tongue the nicht, for I wad fain ye had a guid sleep, an' I'm needin' ane sair mysel', for I'm no sae yoong as I ance was, an' I ha'e been that anxious aboot ye, Ma'colm, 'at though I never hed ony feelin's, yet, noo 'at a' 's gaein' richt, an' ye're a' richt, and like to be richt for ever mair, my heid's just like to split. Gang yer wa's to yer bed, and soon may ye sleep. It's the bed yer bonny mither got a soon' sleep in at last, and muckle was she i' the need o' 't! An' jist tak tent the morn what ye say whan Jean's i' the room, or maybe o' the ither side o' the door, for she's no mowse. I dinna ken what gars me keep the jaud. I believe 'at gien the verra deevil himsel' had been wi' me sae lang, I wadna ha'e the hert to turn him aboot his ill business. That's what comes o' haein' no feelin's. Ither fowk wad ha'e gotten rid o' her half a score o years sin' syne."

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### THE TRENCH.

MALCOLM had not yet, after all the health-giving of the voyage, entirely recovered from the effects of the ill-compounded potion. Indeed, sometimes the fear crossed his mind that never would he be the same man again, that the slow furnace of the grave alone would destroy the vile deposit left in his house of life. Hence it came that he was weary, and overslept himself the next day—but it was no great matter; he had yet time enough. He swallowed his breakfast as a working man alone can, and set out for Duff Harbour. At Leith, where they had put in for provisions, he had posted a letter to Mr Soutar, directing him to have Kelpie brought on to his own town, whence he would fetch her himself. The distance was about ten miles, the hour eight, and he was a good enough walker, although boats and horses had combined to prevent him, he confessed, from getting over-fond of Shanks' mare. To men who delight in the motions of a horse under them, the legs of a man are a tame, dull means of progression, although they too have their superiorities; and one of the disciplines of this world is to have to get out of the saddle and walk afoot. He who can do so with perfect serenity, must very nearly have learned with St Paul in whatsoever state he is therein to be content. It was the loveliest of mornings, however, to be abroad in upon any terms, and Malcolm hardly needed the resources of one who knew both how to be abased and how to abound—enviable perfection—for the enjoyment of even a long walk. Heaven and earth were just settling to the work of the day after their morning prayer, and the whole face of things yet wore something of that look of expectation which one who mingled the vision of the poet with the faith of the Christian might well imagine to be their upward look of hope after a night of groaning and travailing—the earnest gaze of the creature waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God; and for himself, though the hardest thing was yet to come, there was a satisfaction in finding himself almost up to his last fence, with the heavy ploughed land through which he had been floundering nearly all behind him—which figure means that he had almost made up his mind what to do.

When he reached the Duff Arms, he walked straight into the yard, where the first thing he saw was a stable boy in the air, hanging on to a twitch on the nose of the rearing Kelpie. In another instant he would have been killed or maimed for life, and Kelpie loose, and scouring the streets of Duff Harbour. When she heard Malcolm's voice and the sound of his running feet, she stopped as if to listen. He flung the boy aside and caught her halter. Once or twice more she reared, in the vain hope of so ridding herself of the pain that clung to her lip and nose, nor did she, through the mist of her anger and suffering, quite recognize her master in his yacht uniform. But the torture decreasing, she grew able to scent his presence, welcomed him with her usual glad whinny, and allowed him to do with her as he would.

Having fed her, found Mr Soutar, and arranged several matters with him, he set out for home.

That was a ride! Kelpie was mad with life. Every available field he jumped her into, and she tore its element of space at least to shreds with her spurning hoofs. But the distance was not great enough to quiet her before they got to hard turnpike and young plantations. He would have entered at the grand gate, but found no one at the lodge, for the factor, to save a little, had dismissed the old keeper. He had therefore to go on, and through the town, where, to the awe-stricken eyes of the population peeping from doors and windows, it seemed as if the terrible horse would carry him right over the roofs of the fisher cottages below, and out to sea. "Eh, but he's a terrible cratur that Ma'colm MacPhail!" said the old wives to each other, for they felt there must be something wicked in him to ride like that. But he turned her aside from the steep hill, and passed along the street that led to the town-gate of the House.—Whom should he see, as he turned into it, but Mrs Catanach!—standing on her own doorstep, opposite the descent to the Seaton, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking far out over the water through the green smoke of the village below. As long as he could remember her, it had been her wont to gaze thus; though what she could at such times be looking for, except it were the devil in person, he found it hard to conjecture.

At the sound of his approach she turned; and such an expression crossed her face in a momentary flash ere she disappeared in the house, as added considerably to his knowledge of fallen humanity. Before he reached her door she was out again, tying on a clean white apron as she came, and smiling like a dark pool in sunshine. She dropped him a low courtesy, and looked as if she had been occupying her house for months of his absence. But Malcolm would not meet even cunning with its own weapons, and therefore turned away his head, and took no notice of her. She ground her teeth with the fury of hate, and swore that she would yet disappoint him of his purpose, whatever it were, in this masquerade of service. Her heart being scarcely of the calibre to comprehend one like Malcolm's, her theories for the interpretation of the mystery were somewhat wild, and altogether of a character unfit to see the light.

The keeper of the town-gate greeted Malcolm, as he let him in, with a pleased old face and words of welcome; but added instantly, as if it was no time for the indulgence of friendship, that it was a terrible business going on at the Nose.

"What is it?" asked Malcolm, in alarm.

"Ye ha'e been ower lang awa', I doobt," answered the man, "to ken hoo the factor—— But, Lord save ye! haud yer tongue," he interjected, looking fearfully around him. "Gien he kenned 'at I said sic a thing, he wad turn me oot o' hoose an' ha'."

"You've said nothing yet," rejoined Malcolm.

"I said *factor*, an' that same 's 'maist eneuch, for he's like a roarin' lion an' a ragin' bear amang the people, an' that sin' ever ye gaed. Bow o' Meal said i' the meetin' the ither nicht 'at he bude to be the verra man, the wickit ruler propheseed o' sae lang sin' syne i' the beuk o' the Proverbs. Eh! it's an awfu' thing to be foreordeent to oonrichteousness!"

"But you haven't told me what is the matter at Scaurnose," said Malcolm impatiently.

"Ow, it's jist this—at this same's midsimmer-day, an' Blew Peter, honest fallow! he's been for the last three month un'er nottice frae the factor to quit. An' sae, ye see,——"

"To quit!" exclaimed Malcolm. "Sic a thing was never h'ard tell o'!"

"Haith! it's h'ard tell o' noo," returned the gatekeeper. "Quittin' 's as plenty as quicken (*couch-grass*). 'Deed there's maist naething ither h'ard tell o' *bit* quittin'; for the full half o' Scaurnose is un'er like nottice for Michaelmas, an' the Lord kens what it 'll a' en' in!"

"But what's it for? Blue Peter's no the man to misbehave himsel'."

"Weel, ye ken mair yersel' nor ony ither as to the warst fau't there is to lay till's chairge; for they say—that is, *some* say, it's a yer ain wyte, Ma'colm."

"What mean ye, man? Speyk oot," said Malcolm.

"They say it's a' anent the abduckin' o' the markis's boat, 'at you an' him gaed aff wi' thegither."

"That'll hardly haud, seeing the marchioness hersel' cam' hame in her the last nicht."

"Ay, but ye see the decree's gane oot, an' what the factor says is like the laws o' the Medes an' the Prussians, 'at they say's no to be altert; I kenna mysel'."

"Ow weel! gien that be a', I'll see efter that wi' the marchioness."

"Ay, but ye see there's a lot o' the laads there, as I'm tellt, 'at has vooed 'at factor nor factor's man s'all ever set fut in Scaurnose frae this day furth. Gang ye doon to the Seaton, an' see hoo mony o' yer auld freen's ye'll fin' there. Man, they're a' oot to Scaurnose to see the plisky! The factor he's there, I ken, an' some constables wi' 'im—to see 'at his order 's cairried oot. An' the laads they ha'e been fortifeein' the place—as they ca' 't—for the last ook. They've howkit a trenk, they tell me, 'at nane but a hunter on 's horse cud win ower, an' they're postit alang the toonside o' 't wi' sticks an' stanes, an' boat-heuks, an' guns an' pistils. An' gien there bena a man or twa killt a'ready,——"

Before he finished his sentence, Kelpie was levelling herself for the sea-gate.

Johnny Bykes was locking it on the other side, in haste to secure his eye-share of what was going on, when he caught sight of Malcolm tearing up. Mindful of the old grudge, also that there was no marquis now to favour his foe, he finished the arrested act of turning the key, drew it from the lock, and to Malcolm's orders, threats, and appeals, returned for all answer that he had no time to attend to *him*, and so left him looking through the bars. Malcolm dashed across the burn, and round the base of the hill on which stood the little windgod blowing his horn, dismounted, unlocked the door in the wall, got Kelpie through, and was in the saddle again before Johnny was half-way from the gate. When the churl saw him, he trembled, turned, and ran for its shelter again in terror—nor perceived until he reached it, that the insulted groom had gone off like the wind in the opposite direction.

Malcolm soon left the high road and cut across the fields—over which the wind bore cries and shouts, mingled with laughter and the animal sounds of coarse jeering. When he came nigh the cart-road which led into the village, he saw at the entrance of the street a crowd, and rising from it the well-known shape of the factor on his horse. Nearer the sea, where was another entrance through the back-yards of some cottages, was a smaller crowd. Both were now pretty silent, for the attention of all was fixed on Malcolm's approach. As he drew up Kelpie foaming and prancing, and the group made way for her, he saw a deep wide ditch across the road, on whose opposite side was ranged irregularly the flower of Scaurnose's younger manhood, calmly even merrily prepared to defend their entrenchment. They had been chaffing the factor, and loudly challenging the constables to come on, when they recognized Malcolm in the distance, and expectancy stayed the rush of their bruising wit. For they regarded him as beyond a doubt come from the marchioness with messages of goodwill. When he rode up, therefore, they raised a great shout, everyone welcoming him by name. But the factor, who, to judge by appearances, had had his forenoon dram ere he left home, burning with wrath, moved his horse in between Malcolm and the assembled Scaurnoseans on the other side of the ditch. He had self-command enough left, however, to make one attempt at the loftily superior.

"Pray what is your business?" he said, as if he had never seen Malcolm in his life before, "I presume you come with a message."

"I come to beg you, sir, not to go further with this business. Surely the punishment is already enough!" said Malcolm respectfully.

"Who sends me the message?" asked the factor, his teeth clenched, and his eyes flaming.

"One," answered Malcolm, "who has some influence for justice, and will use it, upon whichever side the justice may lie."

"Go to hell," cried the factor, losing utterly his slender self-command, and raising his whip.

Malcolm took no heed of the gesture, for he was at the moment beyond his reach.

"Mr Crathie," he said calmly, "you are banishing the best man in the place."

"No doubt! no doubt! seeing he is a crony of yours," laughed the factor in mighty scorn. "A canting, prayer-meeting rascal!" he added.

"Is that ony waur nor a drucken elyer o' the kirk?" cried Dubs from the other side of the ditch, raising a roar of laughter.

The very purple forsook the factor's face, and left it a corpse-like grey in the fire of his fury.

"Come, come, my men! that's going too far," said Malcolm.

"An' wha ir ye for a fudgie (*truant*) fisher, to gi'e coonsel ohn speired?" shouted Dubs, altogether disappointed in the poor part Malcolm seemed taking. "Haud to the factor there wi' yer coonsel."

"Get out of my way," said Mr Crathie, still speaking through his set teeth, and came straight upon Malcolm. "Home with you! or—r—r——"

Again he raised his whip, this time plainly with intent.

"For God's sake, factor, min' the mere," cried Malcolm, "Ribs an' legs an' a' 'ill be to crack, gien ye anger her wi' yer whuppin'."

As he spoke, he drew a little aside that the factor might pass if he pleased. A noise arose in the smaller crowd, and Malcolm turned to see what it meant: off his guard, he received a stinging cut over the head from the factor's whip. Simultaneously, Kelpie stood up on end, and Malcolm tore the weapon from the treacherous hand.

"If I gave you what you deserve, Mr Crathie, I should knock you and your horse together into that ditch. A touch of the spur would do it. I am not quite sure that I ought not. A nature like yours takes forbearance for fear."

While he spoke, his mare was ramping and kicking, making a clean sweep all about her. Mr Crathie's horse turned restive from sympathy, and it was all his rider could do to keep his seat. As soon as he got Kelpie a little quieter, Malcolm drew near and returned him his whip. He snatched it from his outstretched hand, and essayed a second cut at him, which Malcolm rendered powerless by pushing Kelpie close up to him. Then suddenly wheeling, he left him.

On the other side of the trench the fellows were shouting and roaring with laughter.

"Men," cried Malcolm, "you have no right to stop up this road. I want to go and see Blue Peter."

"Come on," cried one of the young men, emulous of Dubs's humour, and spread out his arms as if to receive Kelpie to his bosom.

"Stand out of the way then," said Malcolm, "I *am* coming."

As he spoke, he took Kelpie a little round, keeping out of the way of the factor, who sat trembling with rage on his still excited animal, and sent her at the trench.

The Deevil's Jock, as they called him, kept jumping, with his arms outspread, from one place to another, as if to receive Kelpie's charge, but when he saw her actually coming, in short, quick bounds, straight to the trench, he was seized with terror, and, half-paralysed, slipped as he turned to flee, and rolled into the ditch, just in time to let Kelpie fly over his head. His comrades scampered right and left, and Malcolm, rather disgusted, took no notice of them.

A cart, loaded with their little all, the horse in the shafts, was standing at Peter's door, but nobody was near it. Hardly was Malcolm well into the close, however, when out rushed Annie, and, heedless of Kelpie's demonstrative repellence, reached up her hands like a child, caught him by the arm, while yet he was busied with his troublesome charge, drew him down towards her, and held him till, in spite of Kelpie, she had kissed him again and again.

"Eh, Ma'colm! eh, my lord!" she said, "ye ha'e saved my faith. I kenned ye wad come!"

"Haud yer tongue, Annie. I mauna be kenned," said Malcolm.

"There's nae danger. They'll tak' it for sweirin'," answered Annie, laughing and crying both at once.

Out next came Blue Peter, his youngest child in his arms.

"Eh, Peter man! I'm blythe to see ye," cried Malcolm. "Gie's a grup o' yer honest han'."

More than even the sight of his face beaming with pleasure, more than that grasp of the hand that would have squeezed the life out of a pole-cat, was the sound of the mother-tongue from his lips. The cloud of Peter's long distrust broke and vanished, and the sky of his soul was straightway a celestial blue. He snatched his hand from Malcolm's, walked back into the empty house, ran into the little closet off the kitchen, bolted the door, fell on his knees in the void little sanctuary that had of late been the scene of so many foiled attempts to lift up his heart, and poured out speechless thanksgiving to the God of all grace and consolation, who had given him back his friend, and that in the time of his sore need. So true was his heart in its love, that, giving thanks for his friend, he forgot that friend was the Marquis of Lossie, before whom his enemy was but as a snail in the sun.

When he rose from his knees, and went out again, his face shining and his eyes misty, his wife was on the top of the cart, tying a rope across the cradle.

"Peter," said Malcolm, "ye was quite richt to gang, but I'm glaid they didna lat ye."

"I wad ha'e been half w'y to Port Gordon or noo," said Peter.

"But noo ye'll no gang to Port Gordon," said Malcolm. "Ye'll jist gang to the Salmon for a feow days, till we see hoo things gang."

"I'll du onything ye like, Ma'colm," said Peter, and went into the house to fetch his bonnet.

In the street arose the cry of a woman, and into the close rushed one of the fisherwives, followed by the factor. He had found a place on the eastern side of the village, where, jumping a low earth wall, he got into a little back yard, and was trampling over its few stocks of kail, and its one dusty miller and double daisy, when the woman to whose cottage it belonged caught sight of him through the window, and running out fell to abusing him in no measured language. He rode at her in his rage, and she fled shrieking into Peter's close, where she took refuge behind the cart, never ceasing her vituperation, but calling him every choice name in her vocabulary. Beside himself with the rage of murdered dignity, he rode up, and struck at her over the corner of the cart, whereupon, from the top of it, Annie Mair ventured to expostulate.

"Hoot, sir! It's no mainners to lat at a wuman like that."

He turned upon her, and gave her a cut on the arm and hand, so stinging that she cried out, and nearly fell from the cart. Out rushed Peter and flew at the factor, who from his seat of vantage began to ply his whip about his head. But Malcolm, who, when the factor appeared, had moved aside to keep Kelpie out of mischief, and saw only the second of the two assaults, came forward with a scramble and a bound.

"Haud awa, Peter," he cried. "This belangs to me. I ga'e him back 's whup, an' sae I'm accoontable.—Mr Crathie,"—and as he spoke he edged his mare up to the panting factor, "the man who strikes a woman must be taught that he is a scoundrel, and that office I take. I would do the same if you were the lord of Lossie instead of his factor."

Mr Crathie, knowing himself now in the wrong, was a little frightened at the set speech, and began to bluster and stammer, but the swift descent of Malcolm's heavy riding whip on his shoulders and back made him voluble in curses. Then began a battle that could not last long with such odds on the side of justice. It was gazed at from the mouth of the close by many spectators, but none dared enter because of the capering and plunging and kicking of the horses. In less than a minute the factor turned to flee, and spurring out of the court, galloped up the street at full stretch.

"Haud oot o' the gait," cried Malcolm, and rode after him. But more careful of the people, he did not get a good start, and the factor was over the trench and into the fields before he caught him up. Then again the stinging switch buckled about the shoulders of the oppressor, driven with all the force of Malcolm's brawny arm. The factor yelled and cursed and swore, and still Malcolm plied the whip, and still the horses flew—over fields and fences and ditches. At length in the last field, from which they must turn into the high road, the factor groaned out—

"For God's sake, Ma'colm, ha'e mercy!"

The youth's uplifted arm fell by his side. He turned his mare's head, and when the factor turned his, he saw the avenger already halfway back to Scaurnose, and the constables in full flight meeting him.

While Malcolm was thus occupied, his sister was writing to Lady Bellair. She told her that, having gone out for a sail in her yacht, which she had sent for from Scotland, the desire to see her home had overpowered her to such a degree that of the intended sail she had made a voyage, and here she was, longing just as much now to see Lady Bellair; and if she thought proper to bring a gentleman to take care of her, he also should be welcomed for her sake. It was a long way for her to come, she said, and Lady Bellair knew what sort of a place it was; but there was nobody in London now, and if she had nothing more enticing on her tablets, &c., &c. She ended with begging her, if she was mercifully inclined to make her happy with her presence, to bring to her Caley and her hound Demon. She had hardly finished when Malcolm presented himself.

She received him very coldly, and declined to listen to anything about the fishers. She insisted that, being one of their party, he was prejudiced in their favour; and that of course a man of Mr Crathie's experience must know better than he what ought to be done with such people, in view of protecting her rights, and keeping them in order. She declared that she was not going to disturb the old way of things to please him; and said that he had now done her all the mischief he could, except, indeed, he were to head the fishers and sack Lossie House. Malcolm found that, by making himself known to her as her brother, he had but given her confidence in speaking her mind to him, and set her free from considerations of personal dignity when she desired to humiliate him. But he was a good deal surprised at the ability with which she set forth and defended her own view of her affairs, for she did not tell him that the Rev. Mr Cairns had been with her all the morning, flattering her vanity, worshipping her power, and generally instructing her in her own greatness—also putting in a word or two anent his friend Mr Crathie and his troubles with her ladyship's fisher tenants. She was still, however, so far afraid of her brother—which state of feeling was, perhaps, the main cause of her insulting behaviour to him—that she sat in some dread lest he might chance to see the address of the letter she had been writing.

I may mention here that Lady Bellair accepted the invitation with pleasure for herself and Liftore, promised to bring Caley, but utterly declined to take charge of Demon, or allow him to be of the party. Thereupon Florimel, who was fond of the animal, and feared much, as he was no favourite, that something would *happen* to him, wrote to Clementina, praying her to visit her in her lovely loneliness—good as The Gloom in its way, though not quite so dark—and to add a hair to the weight of her obligations if she complied, by allowing her deerhound to accompany her. Clementina was the only one, she said, of her friends for whom the animal had ever shown a preference.

Malcolm retired from his sister's presence much depressed, saw Mrs Courthope, who was kind as ever, and betook himself to his own room, next to that in which his strange history began. There he sat down and wrote urgently to Lenorme, stating that he had an important communication to make, and begging him to start for the north the moment he received the letter. A messenger from Duff Harbour well mounted, he said, would ensure his presence within a couple of hours.

He found the behaviour of his old acquaintances and friends in the Seaton much what he had expected: the few were as cordial as ever, while the many still resented, with a mingling of the jealousy of affection, his forsaking of the old life for a calling they regarded as unworthy of one bred at least if not born a fisherman. A few there were besides who always had been, for reasons perhaps best known to themselves, less than friendly. The women were all cordial.

"Sic a mad-like thing," said old Futtocks, who was now the leader of the assembly at the barn, "to gang scoorin' the cuintry on that mad brute o' a mere! What guid, think ye, can come o' sic like?"

"H'ard ye him ever tell the story aboot Colonsay Castel yon'er?"

"Ay hev I."

"Weel, isna his mere 'at they ca' Kelpie jist the pictur' o' the deil's ain horse 'at lay at the door an' watched, whan he flaw oot an' tuik the wa' wi' 'im?"

"I cudna say till I saw whether the deil himsel' cud gar her lie still."

## CHAPTER LIX.

### THE PEACEMAKER.

**The** heroes of Scaurnose expected a renewal of the attack, and in greater force, the next day, and made their preparations accordingly, strengthening every weak point around the village. They were put in great heart by Malcolm's espousal of their cause, as they considered his punishment of the factor; but most of them set it down in their wisdom as resulting from the popular condemnation of his previous supineness. It did not therefore add greatly to his influence with them. When he would have prevailed upon them to allow Blue Peter to depart, arguing that they had less right to prevent than the factor had to compel him, they once more turned upon him: what right had he to dictate to them? he did not belong to Scaurnose! He reasoned with them that the factor, although he had not justice, had law on his side, and could turn out whom he pleased. They said—"Let him try it!" He told them that they had given great provocation, for he knew that the men they had assaulted came surveying for a harbour, and that they ought at least to make some apology for having maltreated them. It was all useless: that was the women's doing, they said; besides they did not believe him; and if what he said was true, what was the thing to them, seeing they were all under notice to leave? Malcolm said that perhaps an apology would be accepted. They told him, if he did not take himself off, they would serve him as he had served the factor. Finding expostulation a failure, therefore, he begged Joseph and Annie to settle themselves again as comfortably as they could, and left them.

Contrary to the expectation of all, however, and considerably to the disappointment of the party of Dubs, Fite Folp, and the rest, the next day was as peaceful as if Scaurnose had been a halycon nest floating on the summer waves; and it was soon reported that, in consequence of the punishment he had received from Malcolm, the factor was far too ill to be troublesome to any but his wife. This was true, but, severe as his chastisement was, it was not severe enough to have had any such consequences but for his late growing habit of drinking whisky. As it was, fever had followed upon the combination of bodily and mental suffering. But already it had wrought this good in him, that he was far more keenly aware of the brutality of the offence of which he had been guilty than he would otherwise have been all his life through. To his wife, who first learned the reason of Malcolm's treatment of him from his delirious talk in the night, it did not, circumstances considered, appear an enormity, and her indignation with the avenger of it, whom she had all but hated before, was furious. Malcolm, on his part, was greatly concerned to hear the result of his severity. He refrained, however, from calling to inquire, knowing it would be interpreted as an insult, not accepted as a sign of sympathy. He went to the doctor instead—who, to his consternation, looked very serious at first. But when he learned all about the affair, he changed his view considerably, and condescended to give good hopes of his coming through, even adding that it would lengthen his life by twenty years if it broke him of his habits of whisky-drinking and rage.

And now Malcolm had a little time of leisure, which he put to the best possible use in strengthening his relations with the fishers. For he had nothing to do about the House, except look after Kelpie; and Florimel, as if determined to make him feel that he was less to her than before, much as she used to enjoy seeing him sit his mare, never took him out with her—always Stoat. He resolved therefore, seeing he must yet delay action a while in the hope of the appearance of Lenorme, to go out as in the old days after the herring, both for the sake of splicing, if possible, what strands had been broken between him and the fishers, and of renewing for himself the delights of elemental conflict. With these views, he hired himself to the Partan, whose boat's crew was short-handed. And now, night after night, he revelled in the old pleasure, enhanced by so many months of deprivation. Joy itself seemed embodied in the wind blowing on him out of the misty infinite while his boat rocked and swung on the waters, hanging between two worlds, that in which the wind blew, and that other dark-swaying mystery whereinto the nets to which it was tied went away down and down, gathering the harvest of the ocean. It was as if nature called up all her motherhood to greet and embrace her long absent son. When it came on to blow hard, as it did once and again during those summer nights, instead of making him feel small and weak in the midst of the storming forces, it gave him a glorious sense of power and unconquerable life. And when his watch was out, and the boat lay quiet, like a horse tethered and asleep in his clover-field, he too would fall asleep with a sense of simultaneously deepening and vanishing delight such as he had not at all in other conditions experienced. Ever since the poison had got into his system, and crept where it yet lay lurking in hidden corners and crannies, a noise at night would on shore startle him awake, and set his heart beating hard; but no loudest sea-noise ever woke him; the stronger the wind flapped its wings around him, the deeper he slept. When a comrade called him by name, he was up at once and wide awake.

It answered also all his hopes in regard to his companions and the fisher-folk generally. Those who had really known him found the same old Malcolm, and those who had doubted him soon began to see that at least he had lost nothing in courage or skill or goodwill: ere long he was even a greater favourite than before. On his part, he learned to understand far better the nature of his people, as well as the individual characters of them, for his long (but not too long) absence and return enabled him to regard them with unaccustomed, and therefore in some respects more discriminating eyes.

Duncan's former dwelling happening to be then occupied by a lonely woman, Malcolm made arrangements with her to take them both in; so that in relation to his grandfather too something very much like the old life returned for a time—with this difference, that Duncan soon began to check himself as often as the name of his hate, with its accompanying curse, rose to his lips.

The factor continued very ill. He had sunk into a low state, in which his former indulgence was greatly against him. Every night the fever returned, and at length his wife was worn out with watching, and waiting upon him.

And every morning Lizzy Findlay, without fail, called to inquire how Mr Crathie had spent the night. To the last, while quarrelling with every one of her neighbours with whom he had anything to do, he had continued kind to her, and she was more grateful than one in other trouble than hers could have understood. But she did not know that an element in the origination of his kindness was the belief that it was by Malcolm she had been wronged and forsaken.

Again and again she had offered, in the humblest manner, to ease his wife's burden by sitting with him at night; and at last, finding she could hold up no longer, Mrs Crathie consented. But even after a week she found herself still unable to resume the watching, and so, night after night, resting at home during a part of the day, Lizzy sat by the sleeping factor, and when he woke ministered to him like a daughter. Nor did even her mother object, for sickness is a wondrous reconciler. Little did the factor suspect, however, that it was partly for Malcolm's sake she nursed him, anxious to shield the youth from any possible consequences of his righteous vengeance.

While their persecutor lay thus, gradually everything at Scaurnose, and consequently at the Seaton, lapsed into its old way, and the summer of such content as before they had possessed, returned to the fishers. I fear it would have proved hard for some of them, had they made effort in that direction, to join in the prayer, if prayer it may be called, put up in church for him every Sunday. What a fearful canopy the prayers that do not get beyond the atmosphere would make if they turned brown with age! Having so lately seen the factor going about like a maniac, raving at this piece of damage and that heap of dirt, the few fishers present could never help smiling when Mr Cairns prayed for him as "the servant of God and his church now lying grievously afflicted—persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed;"—having found the fitting phrases he seldom varied them.

Through her sorrow, Lizzy had grown tender, as through her shame she had grown wise. That the factor had been much in the wrong only rendered her anxious sympathy the more eager to serve him. Knowing so well what it was to have done wrong, she was pitiful over him, and her ministrations were none the less devoted that she knew exactly how Malcolm thought and felt about him; for the affair, having taken place in open village and wide field and in the light of mid-day, and having been reported by eye-witnesses many, was everywhere perfectly known, and Malcolm therefore talked of it freely to his friends, amongst them both to Lizzy and her mother.

Sickness sometimes works marvellous changes, and the most marvellous on persons who to the ordinary observer seem the least liable to change. Much apparent steadfastness of nature, however, is but sluggishness, and comes from incapacity to generate change or contribute towards personal growth; and it follows that those whose nature is such can as little prevent or retard any change that has its initiative beyond them. The men who impress the world as the mightiest are those often who *can* the least—never those who can the most in their natural kingdom; generally those whose frontiers lie openest to the inroads of temptation, whose atmosphere is most subject to moody changes and passionate convulsions, who, while perhaps they can whisper laws to a hemisphere, can utter no decree of smallest potency as to how things shall be within themselves. Place Alexander ille Magnus beside Malcolm's friend Epictetus, ille servorum servus; take his crutch from the slave and set the hero upon his Bucephalus—but set them alone and in a desert: which will prove the great man? which the unchangeable? The question being what the man himself shall or shall not be, shall or shall not feel, shall or shall not recognize as of himself and troubling the motions of his being, Alexander will prove a mere earth-bubble, Epictetus a cavern in which pulses the tide of the eternal and infinite Sea.

But then first, when the false strength of the self-imagined great man is gone, when the want or the sickness has weakened the self-assertion which is so often mistaken for strength of individuality, when the occupations in which he formerly found a comfortable consciousness of being have lost their interest, his ambitions their glow, and his consolations their colour, when suffering has wasted away those upper strata of his factitious consciousness, and laid bare the lower, simpler, truer deeps, of which he has never known or has forgotten the existence, then there is a hope of his commencing a new and real life. Powers then, even powers within himself, of which he knew nothing, begin to assert themselves, and the man commonly reported to possess a strong will, is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. This factor, this man of business, this despiser of humbug, to whom the scruples of a sensitive conscience were a contempt, would now lie awake in the night and weep. "Ah!" I hear it answered, "but that was the weakness caused by his illness." True: but what then had become of his strength? And was it all weakness? What if this weakness was itself a sign of returning life, not of advancing death—of the dawn of a new and genuine strength! For he wept because, in the visions of his troubled brain, he saw once more the cottage of his father the shepherd, with all its store of lovely nothings round which the nimbus of sanctity had gathered while he thought not of them; wept over the memory of that moment of delight when his mother kissed him for parting with his willow whistle to the sister who cried for it: he cried now in his turn, after five and fifty years, for not yet had the little fact done with him, not yet had the kiss of his mother lost its power on the man: wept over the sale of the pet-lamb, though he had himself sold thousands of lambs since; wept over even that bush of dusty miller by the door, like the one he trampled under his horse's feet in the little yard at Scaurnose that horrible day. And oh, that nest of wild bees with its combs of honey unspeakable! He used to laugh and sing then: he laughed still sometimes—he could hear how he laughed, and it sounded frightful—but he never sang! Were the tears that honoured such childish memories all of weakness? Was it cause of regret that he had not been wicked enough to have become impregnable to such foolish trifles? Unable to mount a horse, unable to give an order, not caring even for his toddy, he was left at the mercy of his fundamentals; his childhood came up and claimed him, and he found the childish things he had put away better than the manly things he had adopted. It is one thing for St. Paul and another for Mr Worldly Wiseman to put away childish things. The ways they do it, and the things they substitute, are both so different? And now first to me, whose weakness it is to love life more than manners, and men more than their portraits, the man begins to grow interesting. Picture the dawn of innocence on a dull, whisky-drinking, common-place soul, stained by self-indulgence, and distorted by injustice! Unspeakably more interesting and lovely is to me such a dawn than the honeymoon of the most passionate of lovers, except indeed I know them such lovers that their love will outlast all the moons.

"I'm a poor creature, Lizzy," he said, turning his heavy face one midnight towards the girl, as she sat half-dozing, ready to start awake.

"God comfort ye, sir!" said the girl.

"He'll take good care of that!" returned the factor. "What did I ever do to deserve it?—There's that MacPhail, now—to think of *him*? Didn't I do what man could for him? Didn't I keep him about the place when all the rest were dismissed? Didn't I give him the key of the library, that he might read and improve his mind? And look what comes of it!"

"Ye mean, sir," said Lizzy, quite innocently, "'at that 's the w'y ye ha'e dune wi' God, an' sae he winna heed ye?"

The factor had meant nothing in the least like it. He had merely been talking as the imps of suggestion tossed up. His logic was as sick and helpless as himself. So at that he held his peace—stung in his pride at least—perhaps in his conscience too, only he was not prepared to be rebuked by a girl like her, who had——Well, he must let it pass: how much better was he himself?

But Lizzy was loyal: she could not hear him speak so of Malcolm and hold her peace as if she agreed in his condemnation.

"Ye'll ken Ma'colm better some day, sir," she said.

"Well, Lizzy," returned the sick man, in a tone that but for feebleness would have been indignant, "I have heard a good deal of the way women *will* stand up for men that have treated them cruelly, but you to stand up for *him* passes!"

"He's been the best friend I ever had," said Lizzy.

"Girl! how can you sit there, and tell me so to my face?" cried the factor, his voice strengthened by the righteousness of the reproof it bore. "If it were not the dead of the night——"

"I tell ye naething but the trowth, sir," said Lizzy, as the contingent threat died away. "But ye maun lie still or I maun gang for the mistress. Gien ye be the waur the morn, it'll be a' my wyte, 'cause I cudna bide to hear sic things said o' Ma'colm"

"Do you mean to tell me," persisted her charge, heedless of her expostulation, "that the fellow who brought you to disgrace, and left you with a child you could ill provide for—and I well know never sent you a penny all the time he was away, whatever he may have done now, is the best friend you ever had?"

"Noo God forgi'e ye, Maister Crathie, for threipin' sic a thing!" cried Lizzy, rising as if she would leave him. "Ma'colm MacPhail 's as clear o' ony sin like mine as my wee bairnie itsel'."

"Do ye daur tell *me* he's no the father o' that same, lass?"

"*No;* nor never will be the father o' ony bairn whase mither 's no his wife!" said Lizzy, with burning cheeks and resolute voice.

The factor, who had risen on his elbow to look her in the face, fell back in silence, and neither of them spoke for what seemed to the watcher a long time. When she ventured to look at him, he was asleep.

He lay in one of those troubled slumbers into which weakness and exhaustion will sometimes pass very suddenly; and in that slumber he had a dream which he never forgot. He thought he had risen from his grave with an awful sound in his ears, and knew he was wanted at the judgment seat. But he did not want to go, therefore crept into the porch of the church, and hoped to be forgotten. But suddenly an angel appeared with a flaming sword and drove him out of the churchyard away to Scaurnose where the judge was sitting. And as he fled in terror before the angel, he fell, and the angel came and stood over him, and his sword flashed torture into his bones, but he could not and dared not rise. At last, summoning all his strength, he looked up at him, and cried out, "Sir, ha'e mercy, for God's sake." Instantly all the flames drew back into the sword, and the blade dropped, burning like a brand, from the hilt, which the angel threw away.—And lo! it was Malcolm MacPhail, and he was stooping to raise him. With that he awoke, and there was Lizzy looking down on him anxiously.

"What are you looking like that for?" he asked crossly.

She did not like to tell him that she had been alarmed by his dropping asleep: and in her confusion she fell back on the last subject.

"There maun be some mistak, Mr Crathie," she said. "I wuss ye wad tell me what gars ye hate Ma'colm MacPhail as ye du."

The factor, although he seemed to himself to know well enough, was yet a little puzzled how to commence his reply; and therewith a process began that presently turned into something with which never in his life before had his inward parts been acquainted—a sort of self-examination to wit. He said to himself, partly in the desire to justify his present dislike—he would not call it hate, as Lizzy did—that he used to get on with the lad well enough, and had never taken offence at his freedoms, making no doubt his manner came of his blood, and he could not help it, being a chip of the old block; but when he ran away with the marquis's boat, and went to the marchioness and told her lies against him—then what could he do but—dislike him?

Arrived at this point, he opened his mouth and gave the substance of what preceded it for answer to Lizzy's question. But she replied at once.

"Nobody 'ill gar me believe, sir, 'at Ma'colm MacPhail ever tellt a lee again' you or onybody. I dinna believe he ever tellt a lee in 's life. Jist ye exem' him weel anent it, sir. An' for the boat, nae doobt it was makin' free to tak it; but ye ken, sir, 'at hoo he was maister o' the same. It was in his chairge, an' ye ken little aboot boats yersel,' or the sailin' o' them, sir."

"But it was me that engaged him again, after all the servants at the House had been dismissed: he was *my* servant."

"That maks the thing luik waur, nae doobt," allowed Lizzy, with something of cunning. "Hoo was't 'at he cam to du 't ava' (*of all, at all*), sir? Can ye min'?" she pursued.

"I discharged him."

"An' what for, gien I may mak' bold to speir, sir?" she went on.

"For insolence."

"Wad ye tell me hoo he answert ye? Dinna think me meddlin', sir. I'm clear certain there's been some mistak. Ye cudna be sae guid to me, an' be ill to him, ohn some mistak."

It was consoling to the conscience of the factor, in regard of his behaviour to the two women, to hear his own praise for kindness from woman's lips. He took no offence therefore at her persistent questioning, but told her as well and as truly as he could remember, with no more than the all but unavoidable exaggeration with which feeling *will* colour fact, the whole passage between Malcolm and himself concerning the sale of Kelpie, and closed with an appeal to the judgment of his listener, in which he confidently anticipated her verdict.

"A most ridic'lous thing! ye can see yersel' as weel 's onybody, Lizzy! An' sic a thing to ca' an honest man like mysel' a hypocrete for! ha! ha! ha! There's no a bairn 'atween John o' Groat's an' the Lan's En' disna ken 'at the seller o' a horse is b'un' to reese (*extol*) him, an' the buyer to tak care o' himsel'. I'll no say it's jist allooable to tell a doonricht lee, but ye may come full nearer till't in horse-dealin', ohn sinned, nor in ony ither kin' o' merchandeze. It's like luve an' war, in baith which, it's weel keened, a' thing's fair. The saw sud rin – *Luve an' war an' horse-dealin'.*—Divna ye see, Lizzy?"

But Lizzy did not answer, and the factor, hearing a stifled sob, started to his elbow.

"Lie still, sir," said Lizzy. "It's naething. I was only jist thinkin' 'at that wad be the w'y 'at the father o' my bairn rizoned wi' himsel' whan he lee'd to me."

"Hey!" said the astonished factor, and in his turn held his peace, trying to think.

Now Lizzy, for the last few months, had been going to school, the same school with Malcolm, open to all comers, the only school where one is sure to be led in the direction of wisdom, and there she had been learning to some purpose—as plainly appeared before she had done with the factor.

"Whase kirk are ye elder o', Maister Crathie?" she asked presently.

"Ow, the kirk o' Scotlan', of coorse!" answered the patient, in some surprise at her ignorance.

"Ay, ay," returned Lizzy; "but whase aucht (*owning, property*) is 't?"

"Ow, whase but the Redeemer's!"

"An' div ye think, Mr Craithie, 'at gien Jesus Christ had had a horse to sell, he wad ha'e hidden frae him 'at wad buy, ae hair o' a fau't 'at the beast hed? Wad he no ha'e dune till's neiper as he wad ha'e his neiper du to him?"

"Lassie! lassie! tak care hoo ye even *him* to sic like as hiz (*us*). What wad *he* hae to du wi' horse-flesh?"

Lizzy held her peace. Here was no room for argument. He had flung the door of his conscience in the face of her who woke it. But it was too late, for the word was in already. Oh! that false reverence which men substitute for adoring obedience, and wherewith they reprove the childlike spirit that does not know another kingdom than that of God and that of Mammon! God never gave man thing to do concerning which it were irreverent to ponder how the son of God would have done it.

But, I say, the word was in, and, partly no doubt from its following so close upon the dream the factor had had, was potent in its operation. He fell a thinking, and a thinking more honestly than he had thought for many a day. And presently it was revealed to him that, if he were in the horse-market wanting to buy, and a man there who had to sell said to him—"He wadna du for you, sir; ye wad be tired o' 'im in a week," he would never remark, "What a fool the fellow is!" but—"Weel noo, I ca' that neibourly!" He did not get quite so far just then as to see that every man to whom he might want to sell a horse was as much his neighbour as his own brother; nor, indeed, if he had got as far, would it have indicated much progress in honesty, seeing he would at any time, when needful and possible, have cheated that brother in the matter of a horse, as certainly as he would a Patagonian or a Chinaman. But the warped glass of a bad maxim had at least been cracked in his window.

The peacemakers sat in silence the rest of the night, but the factor's sleep was broken, and at times he wandered. He was not so well the next day, and his wife, gathering that Lizzie had been talking, and herself feeling better, would not allow her to sit up with him any more.

Days and days passed, and still Malcolm had no word from Lenorme, and was getting hopeless in respect of that quarter of possible aid. But so long as Florimel could content herself with the quiet of Lossie House, there was time to wait, he said to himself. She was not idle, and that was promising. Every day she rode out with Stoat. Now and then she would make a call in the neighbourhood, and, apparently to trouble Malcolm, took care to let him know that on one of these occasions her call had been upon Mrs Stewart. One thing he did feel was that she made no renewal of her friendship with his grandfather: she had, alas! outgrown the girlish fancy. Poor Duncan took it much to heart. She saw more of the minister and his wife, who both flattered her, than anybody else, and was expecting the arrival of Lady Bellair and Lord Liftore with the utmost impatience. They, for their part, were making the journey by the easiest possible stages, tacking and veering, and visiting everyone of their friends that lay between London and Lossie: they thought to give Florimel the little lesson, that, though they accepted her invitation, they had plenty of friends in the world besides her ladyship, and were not dying to see her.

One evening, Malcolm, as he left the grounds of Mr Morrison, on whom he had been calling, saw a travelling carriage pass towards Portlossie; and something liker fear laid hold of his heart than he had ever felt except when Florimel and he on the night of the storm took her father for Lord Gernon the wizard. As soon as he reached certain available fields, he sent Kelpie tearing across them, dodged through a fir-wood, and came out on the road half a mile in front of the carriage: as again it passed him he saw that his fears were facts, for in it sat the bold-faced countess, and the mean-hearted lord. Something *must* be done at last, and until it was done good watch must be kept.

I must here note that, during this time of hoping and waiting. Malcolm had attended to another matter of importance. Over every element influencing his life, his family, his dependents, his property, he desired to possess a lawful, honest command: where he had to render account, he would be head. Therefore, through Mr Soutar's London agent, to whom he sent up Davy, and whom he brought acquainted with Merton, and his former landlady at the curiosity shop, he had discovered a good deal about Mrs Catanach from her London associates, among them the herb-doctor, and his little boy who had watched Davy, and he had now almost completed an outline of evidence, which, grounded on that of Rose, might be used against Mrs Catanach at any moment. He had also set inquiries on foot in the track of Caley's antecedents, and had discovered more than the acquaintance between her and Mrs Catanach. Also he had arranged that Hodges, the man who had lost his leg through his cruelty to Kelpie, should leave for Duff Harbour as soon as possible after his discharge from the hospital. He was determined to crush the evil powers which had been ravaging his little world.

## CHAPTER LX.

### AN OFFERING.

Clementina was always ready to accord any reasonable request Florimel could make of her; but her letter lifted such a weight from her heart and life that she would now have done whatever she desired, reasonable or unreasonable, provided only it was honest. She had no difficulty in accepting Florimel's explanation that her sudden disappearance was but a breaking of the social gaol, the flight of the weary bird from its foreign cage back to the country of its nest; and that same morning she called upon Demon. The hound, feared and neglected, was rejoiced to see her, came when she called him, and received her caresses: there was no ground for dreading his company. It was a long journey, but if it had been across a desert instead of through her own country, the hope that lay at the end of it would have made it more than pleasant. She, as well as Lady Bellair, had friends upon the way, but no desire to lengthen the journey or shorten its tedium by visiting them.

The letter would have found her at Wastbeach instead of

London, had not the society and instructions of the schoolmaster detained her a willing prisoner to its heat and glare and dust. Him only in all London must she see to bid good-bye. To Camden Town therefore she went that same evening, when his work would be over for the day. As usual now, she was shown into his room—his only one. As usual also, she found him poring over his Greek Testament. The gracious, graceful woman looked lovelily strange in that mean chamber—like an opal in a brass ring. There was no such contrast between the room and its occupant. His bodily presence was too weak to "stick fiery off" from its surroundings, and to the eye that saw through the bodily presence to the inherent grandeur, that grandeur suggested no discrepancy, being of the kind that lifts everything to its own level, casts the mantle of its own radiance around its surroundings. Still to the eye of love and reverence it was not pleasant to see him in such *entourage*, and now that Clementina was going to leave him, the ministering spirit that dwelt in the woman was troubled.

"Ah!" he said, and rose as she entered; "this is then the angel of my deliverance!" But with such a smile he did not look as if he had much to be delivered from. "You see," he went on, "old man as I am, and peaceful, the summer will lay hold upon me. She stretches out a long arm into this desert of houses and stones, and sets me longing after the green fields and the living air—it seems dead here—and the face of God—as much as one may behold of the Infinite through the revealing veil of earth and sky and sea. Shall I confess my weakness, my poverty of spirit, my covetousness after the visual? I was even getting a little tired of that glorious God-and-man-lover, Saul of Tarsus—no, not of him, never of *him*, only of his shadow in his words. Yet perhaps, yes I think so, it is God alone of whom a man can never get tired. Well, no matter; tired I was; when lo! here comes my pupil, with more of God in her face than all the worlds and their skies he ever made!"

"I would my heart were as full of him, too, then, sir!" answered Clementina. "But if I am anything of a comfort to you, I am more than glad,—therefore the more sorry to tell you that I am going to leave you—though for a little while only, I trust."

"You do not take me by surprise, my lady. I have of course been looking forward for some time to my loss and your gain. The world is full of little deaths, deaths of all sorts and sizes, rather let me say. For this one I was prepared. The good summer land calls you to its bosom, and you must go."

"Come with me," cried Clementina, her eyes eager with the light of the sudden thought, while her heart reproached her grievously that only now first had it come to her.

"A man must not leave the most irksome work for the most peaceful pleasure," answered the schoolmaster. "I am able to live—yes, and do my work, without you, my lady," he added with a smile, "though I shall miss you sorely."

"But you do not know where I want you to come," she said.

"What difference can that make, my lady, except indeed in the amount of pleasure to be refused, seeing this is not a matter of choice? I must be with the children whom I have engaged to teach, and whose parents pay me for my labour—not with those who, besides, can do well without me."

"I cannot, sir—not for long, at least."

"What! not with Malcolm to supply my place?"

Clementina blushed, but only like a white rose. She did not turn her head aside; she did not lower their lids to veil the light she felt mount into her eyes; she looked him gently in the face as before, and her aspect of entreaty did not change.

"Ah! do not be unkind, master," she said.

"Unkind!" he repeated. "You know I am not. I have more kindness in my heart than my lips can tell. You do not know, you could not yet imagine the half of what I hope of and for and from you."

"I *am* going to see Malcolm," she said, with a little sigh. "That is, I am going to visit Lady Lossie at her place in Scotland—your own old home, where so many must love you.—*Can't* you come? I shall be travelling alone, quite alone, except my servants."

A shadow came over the schoolmaster's face.

"You do not *think*, my lady, or you would not press me. It pains me that you do not see at once it would be dishonest to go without timely notice to my pupils, and to the public too. But, beyond that quite, I never do anything of myself. I go, not where I wish, but where I seem to be called or sent. I never even wish much—except when I pray to him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. After what he wants to give me I am wishing all day long. I used to build many castles, not without a beauty of their own—that was when I had less understanding: now I leave them to God to build for me—he does it better and they last longer. See now, this very hour, when I needed help—could I have contrived a more lovely annihilation of the monotony that threatened to invade my weary spirit, than this inroad of light in the person of my lady Clementina? Nor will he allow me to get over-wearied with vain efforts. I do not think he will keep me here long, for I find I cannot do much for these children. They are but some of his many pagans—not yet quite ready to receive Christianity, I think—not like children with some of the old seeds of the truth buried in them, that want to be turned up nearer to the light. This ministration I take to be more for my good than theirs—a little trial of faith and patience for me—a stony corner of the lovely valley of humiliation to cross. True, I *might* be happier where I could hear the larks, but I do not know that anywhere have I been more peaceful than in this little room, on which I see you so often cast round your eyes curiously—perhaps pitifully, my lady?"

"It is not at all a fit place for *you*," said Clementina, with a touch of indignation.

"Softly, my lady—lest, without knowing it, your love should make you sin! Who set thee, I pray, for a guardian angel over my welfare? I could scarce have a lovelier—true! but where is thy brevet? No, my lady! it is a greater than thou that sets me the bounds of my habitation. Perhaps he may give me a palace one day. If I might choose, it would be the things that belong to a cottage—the whiteness and the greenness and the sweet odours of cleanliness. But the father has decreed for his children that they shall know the thing that is neither their ideal nor his. Who can imagine how in this respect things looked to our Lord when he came and found so little faith on the earth! But, perhaps, my lady, you would not pity my present condition so much, if you had seen the cottage in which I was born, and where my father and my mother loved each other, and died happier than on their wedding day. There I was happy too until their loving ambition decreed that I should be a scholar and a clergyman. Not before then did I ever know anything worthy of the name of trouble. A little cold and a little hunger at times, and not a little restlessness always was all. But then—ah then, my troubles began! Yet God, who bringeth light out of darkness, hath brought good even out of my weakness and presumption and half unconscious falsehood!—When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning—as I purpose"

"Then God be with thee. He *is* with thee, only my prayer is that thou mayest know it. He is with me and I know it. He does not find this chamber too mean or dingy or unclean to let me know him near me in it."

"Tell me one thing before I go," said Clementina: "are we not commanded to bear each other's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ? I read it to-day."

"Then why ask me?"

"For another question: does not that involve the command to those who have burdens that they should allow others to bear them?"

"Surely, my lady. But *I* have no burden to let you bear."

"Why should I have everything, and you nothing?—Answer me that."

"My lady, I have millions more than you, for I have been gathering the crumbs under my master's table for thirty years."

"You are a king," answered Clementina. "But a king needs a handmaiden somewhere in his house: that let *me* be in yours. No, I will be proud, and assert my rights. I am your daughter. If I am not, why am I here? Do you not remember telling me that the adoption of God meant a closer relation than any other fatherhood, even his own first fatherhood could signify? You cannot cast me off if you would. Why should you be poor when I am rich?—You *are* poor. You cannot deny it," she concluded with a serious playfulness.

"I will not deny my privileges," said the schoolmaster, with a smile such as might have acknowledged the possession of some exquisite and envied rarity.

"I believe," insisted Clementina, "you are just as poor as the apostle Paul when he sat down to make a tent—or as our Lord himself after he gave up carpentering."

"You are wrong there, my lady. I am not so poor as they must often have been."

"But I don't know how long I may be away, and you may fall ill, or—or—see some—some book you want very much, or——"

"I never do," said the schoolmaster.

"What! never see a book you want to have?"

"No; not now. I have my Greek Testament, my Plato, and my Shakspere—and one or two little books besides, whose wisdom I have not yet quite exhausted."

"I can't bear it!" cried Clementina, almost on the point of weeping. "You will not let me near you. You put out an arm as long as the summer's and push me away from you. *Let* me be your servant."

As she spoke, she rose, and walking softly up to him where he sat kneeled at his knees, and held out suppliantly a little bag of white silk, tied with crimson.

"Take it—father," she said, hesitating, and bringing the word out with an effort; "take your daughter's offering—a poor thing to show her love, but something to ease her heart."

He took it, and weighed it up and down in his hand with an amused smile, but his eyes full of tears. It was heavy. He opened it. A chair was within his reach, he emptied it on the seat of it, and laughed with merry delight as its contents came tumbling out.

"I never saw so much gold in my life, if it were all taken together," he said. "What beautiful stuff it is! But I don't want it, my dear. It would but trouble me." And as he spoke, he began to put it in the bag again. "You will want it for your journey," he said.

"I have plenty in my reticule," she answered. "That is a mere nothing to what I could have to-morrow morning for writing a cheque. I am afraid I am very rich. It is such a shame! But I can't well help it. You must teach me how to become poor.—Tell me true: how much money have you?"

She said this with such an earnest look of simple love that the schoolmaster made haste to rise, that he might conceal his growing emotion.

"Rise, my dear lady," he said, as he rose himself, "and I will show you."

He gave her his hand, and she obeyed, but troubled and disappointed, and so stood looking after him, while he went to a drawer. Thence, searching in a corner of it, he brought a half-sovereign, a few shillings, and some coppers, and held them out to her on his hand, with the smile of one who has proved his point.

"There!" he said; "do you think Paul would have stopped preaching to make a tent so long as he had as much as that in his pocket? I shall have more on Saturday, and I always carry a month's rent in my good old watch, for which I never had much use, and now have less than ever."

Clementina had been struggling with herself; now she burst into tears.

"Why, what a misspending of precious sorrow!" exclaimed the schoolmaster. "Do you think because a man has not a gold mine he must die of hunger? I once heard of a sparrow that never had a worm left for the morrow, and died a happy death notwithstanding." As he spoke he took her handkerchief from her hand and dried her tears with it. But he had enough ado to keep his own back. "Because I won't take a bagful of gold from you when I don't want it," he went on, "do you think I should let myself starve without coming to you? I promise you I will let you know—come to you if I can, the moment I get too hungry to do my work well, and have no money left. Should I think it a disgrace to take money from *you?* That would show a poverty of spirit such as I hope never to fall into. My *sole* reason for refusing it now is that I do not need it."

But for all his loving words and assurances Clementina could not stay her tears. She was not ready to weep, but now her eyes were as a fountain.

"See, then, for your tears are hard to bear, my daughter," he said, "I will take one of these golden ministers, and if it has flown from me ere you come, seeing that, like the raven, it will not return if once I let it go, I will ask you for another. It *may* be God's will that you should feed me for a time."

"Like one of Elijah's ravens," said Clementina, with an attempted laugh that was really a sob.

"Like a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," said the schoolmaster.

A moment of silence followed, broken only by Clementina's failures in quieting herself.

"To me," he resumed, "the sweetest fountain of money is the hand of love, but a man has no right to take it from that fountain except he is in want of it. I am not. True, I go somewhat bare, my lady; but what is that when my Lord would have it so?"

He opened again the bag, and slowly, reverentially indeed, drew from it one of the new sovereigns with which it was filled. He put it into a waistcoat pocket, and laid the bag on the table.

"But your clothes are shabby, sir," said Clementina, looking at him with a sad little shake of the head.

"Are they?" he returned, and looked down at his lower garments, reddening and anxious. "—I did not think they were more than a little rubbed, but they shine somewhat," he said. "—They are indeed polished by use," he went on, with a troubled little laugh; "but they have no holes yet—at least none that are visible," he corrected. "If you tell me, my lady, if you honestly tell me that my garments"—and he looked at the sleeve of his coat, drawing back his head from it to see it better—"are unsightly, I will take of your money and buy me a new suit."

Over his coat-sleeve he regarded her, questioning.

"Everything about you is beautiful!" she burst out. "You want nothing but a body that lets the light through?"

She took the hand still raised in his survey of his sleeve, pressed it to her lips, and walked, with even more than her wonted state, slowly from the room. He took the bag of gold from the table, and followed her down the stair. Her chariot was waiting her at the door. He handed her in, and laid the bag on the little seat in front.

"Will you tell him to drive home," she said, with a firm voice, and a smile which if anyone care to understand, let him read Spenser's fortieth sonnet. And so they parted. The coachman took the queer shabby un-London-like man for a fortune-teller his lady was in the habit of consulting, and paid homage to his power with the handle of his whip as he drove away. The schoolmaster returned to his room, not to his Plato, not even to Saul of Tarsus, but to the Lord himself.

## CHAPTER LXI.

### THOUGHTS.

WHEN Malcolm took Kelpie to her stall the night of the arrival of Lady Bellair and her nephew, he was rushed upon by Demon, and nearly prostrated between his immoderate welcome and the startled rearing of the mare. The hound had arrived a couple of hours before, while Malcolm was out. He wondered he had not seen him with the carriage he had passed, never suspecting he had had another conductress, or dreaming what his presence there signified for him.

I have not said much concerning Malcolm's feelings with regard to Lady Clementina, but all this time the sense of her existence had been like an atmosphere surrounding and pervading his thought. He saw in her the promise of all he could desire to see in woman. His love was not of the blind-little-boy sort, but of a deeper, more exacting, keen-eyed kind, that sees faults where even a true mother will not, so jealous is it of the perfection of the beloved. But one thing was plain even to this seraphic dragon that dwelt sleepless in him, and there was eternal content in the thought, that such a woman, once started on the right way, would soon leave fault and weakness behind her, and become as one of the grand women of old, whose religion was simply what religion is—life—neither more nor less than life. She would be a saint without knowing it, the only grand kind of sainthood. Whoever can think of religion as an addition to life, however glorious—a starry crown, say, set upon the head of humanity, is not yet the least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever thinks of life as a something that could be without religion, is in deathly ignorance of both. Life and religion are one, or neither is anything: I will not say neither is growing to be anything. Religion is no way of life, no show of life, no observance of any sort. It is neither the food nor the medicine of being. It is life essential. To think otherwise is as if a man should pride himself on his honesty, or his parental kindness, or hold up his head amongst men because he never killed one: were he less than honest or kind or free from blood, he would yet think something of himself! The man to whom virtue is but the ornament of character, something over and above, not essential to it, is not yet a man.

If I say then, that Malcolm was always thinking about Lady Clementina when he was not thinking about something he *had* to think about, have I not said nearly enough on the matter? Should I ever dream of attempting to set forth what love is, in such a man for such a woman? There are comparatively few that have more than the glimmer of a notion of what love means. God only knows how grandly, how passionately yet how calmly, how divinely the man and the woman he has made, might, may, shall love each other. One thing only I will dare to say: that the love that belonged to Malcolm's nature was one through the very nerves of which the love of God must rise and flow and return, as its essential life. If any man think that such a love could no longer be the love of the man for the woman, he knows his own nature, and that of the woman he pretends or thinks he adores, but in the darkest of glasses.

Malcolm's lowly idea of himself did not at all interfere with his loving Clementina, for at first his love was entirely dissociated from any thought of hers. When the idea—the mere idea of her loving him presented itself, from whatever quarter suggested, he turned from it with shame and self-reproof: the thought was in its own nature too unfit! That splendour regard him! From a social point of view there was of course little presumption in it. The Marquis of Lossie bore a name that might pair itself with any in the land; but Malcolm did not yet feel that the title made much difference to the fisherman. He was what he was, and that was something very lowly indeed. Yet the thought would at times dawn up from somewhere in the infinite matrix of thought, that perhaps, if he went to college, and graduated, and dressed like a gentleman, and did everything as gentlemen do, in short, claimed his rank, and lived as a marquis should, as well as a fisherman might,—then—then—was it not—might it not be within the bounds of possibility—just within them—that the great-hearted, generous, liberty-loving Lady Clementina, groom as he had been, *menial* as he had heard himself called, and as, ere yet he knew his birth, he had laughed to hear, knowing that his service was true,—that she, who despised nothing human, would be neither disgusted nor contemptuous nor wrathful, if, from a great way off, at an awful remove of humility and worship, he were to wake in her a surmise that he dared feel towards her as he had never felt and never could feel towards any other? For would it not be altogether counter to the principles he had so often heard her announce and defend, to despise him because he had earned his bread by doing honourable work—work hearty, and up to the worth of his wages? Was she one to say and not see—to opine and not believe? or was she one to hold and not practise—to believe for the heart and not for the hand—to say *I go*, and not go—*I love*, and not help? If such she were, then there were for him no further searchings of the heart upon her account; he could but hold up her name in the common prayer for all men, only praying besides not to dream about her when he slept.

At length, such thoughts rising again and again, and ever accompanied by such reflections concerning the truth of her character, and by the growing certainty that her convictions were the souls of actions to be born them, his daring of belief in her strengthened until he began to think that perhaps it would be neither his early history, nor his defective education, nor his clumsiness, that would prevent her from listening to such words wherewith he burned to throw open the gates of his world, and pray her to enter and sit upon its loftiest throne—its loftiest throne but one. And with the thought he felt as if he must run to her, calling aloud that he was the Marquis of Lossie, and throw himself at her feet.

But the wheels of his thought-chariot, self-moved, were rushing, and here was no goal at which to halt or turn!—for, feeling thus, where was his faith in her principles? How now was he treating the truth of her nature? where now were his convictions of the genuineness of her professions? Where were those principles, that truth, those professions, if after all she would listen to a marquis and would not listen to a groom? To suppose such a thing was to wrong her grievously. To herald his suit with his rank would be to insult her, declaring that he regarded her theories of humanity as wordy froth. And what a chance of proving her truth would he not deprive her of, if, as he approached her, he called on the marquis to supplement the man!—But what then was the man, fisherman or marquis, to dare *even himself* to such a glory as the Lady Clementina?—This much of a man at least, answered his waking dignity, that he could not condescend to be accepted as Malcolm, Marquis of Lossie, knowing he would have been rejected as Malcolm MacPhail, fisherman and groom

Accepted as marquis, he would for ever be haunted with the *channering* question whether she would have accepted him as groom? And if in his pain he were one day to utter it, and she in her honesty were to confess she would not, must she not then fall prone from her pedestal in his imagination? Could he then, in love for the woman herself, condescend as marquis to marry one who *might* not have married him as any something else he could honestly have been, under the all enlightening sun?—Ah, but again! was that fair to her yet? Might she not see in the marquis the truth and worth which the blinding falsehoods of society prevented her from seeing in the groom? Might not a lady—he tried to think of a lady in the abstract—might not a lady, in marrying a marquis, a lady to whom from her own position a marquis was just a man on the level, marry in him the man he was, and not the marquis he seemed? Most certainly, he answered: he must not be unfair.—Not the less however did he shrink from the thought of taking her prisoner under the shield of his marquisate, beclouding her nobility, and depriving her of the rare chance of shining forth as the sun in the splendour of womanly truth. No; he would choose the greater risk of losing her, for the chance of winning her greater.

So far Malcolm got with his theories; but the moment he began to think in the least practically, he recoiled altogether from the presumption. Under no circumstances could he ever have the courage to approach Lady Clementina with a thought of himself in his mind. How could he have dared even to raise her imagined eidolon for his thoughts to deal withal. She had never shown him personal favour. He could not tell whether she had listened to what he had tried to lay before her. He did not know that she had gone to hear his master; Florimel had never referred to their visit to Hope Chapel; his surprise would have equalled his delight at the news that she had already become as a daughter to the schoolmaster.

And what had been Clementina's thoughts since learning that Florimel had not run away with her groom? It were hard to say with completeness. Accuracy however may not be equally unattainable. Her first feeling was an utterly inarticulate, undefined pleasure that Malcolm was free to be thought about. She was clear next that it would be matter for honest rejoicing if the truest man she had ever met except his master, was not going to marry such an unreality as Florimel—one concerning whom, as things had been going of late, it was impossible to say that she was not more likely to turn to evil than to good. Clementina with all her generosity could not help being doubtful of a woman who could make a companion of such a man as Liftore, a man to whom every individual particle of Clementina's nature seemed for itself to object. But she was not yet past befriending.

Then she began to grow more *curious* about Malcolm. She had already much real knowledge of him, gathered both from himself and from Mr Graham;—as to what went to make the man, she knew him indeed, not thoroughly, but well; and just therefore, she said to herself, there were some points in his history and condition concerning which she had *curiosity*. The principal of these was whether he might not be engaged to some young woman in his own station of life. It was not merely possible, but was it likely he could have escaped it? In the lower ranks of society, men married younger—they had no false aims to prevent them: that implied earlier engagements. On the other hand, was it likely that in a fishing village there would be any choice of girls who could understand him when he talked about Plato and the New Testament? If there was *one* however, that might be—*worse?*—Yes, *worse;* she accepted the word. Neither was it absolutely necessary in a wife that she should understand more of a husband than his heart. Many learned men had had mere housekeepers for wives, and been satisfied, at least never complained. And what did she know about the fishers, men or women—there were none at Wastbeach? For anything she knew to the contrary, they might all be philosophers together, and a fitting match for Malcolm might be far more easy to find amongst them than in the society to which she herself belonged, where in truth the philosophical element was rare enough. Then arose in her mind, she could not have told how, the vision, half logical, half pictorial, of a whole family of brave, believing, daring, saving fisher-folk, father, mother, boys and girls, each sacrificing to the rest, each sacrificed to by all, and all devoted to their neighbours. Grand it was and blissful, and the borders of the great sea alone seemed fit place for such beings amphibious of time and eternity! Their very toils and dangers were but additional atmospheres to press their souls together! It was glorious! Why had she been born an earl's daughter,—never to look a danger in the face—never to have a chance of a true life—that is, a grand, simple, noble one?—Who then denied her the chance? Had she *no* power to order her own steps, to determine her own being? Was she nailed to her rank? Or who was there that could part her from it? Was she a prisoner in the dungeons of the House of Pride? When the gates of paradise closed behind Adam and Eve, they had this consolation left, that "the world was all before them where to choose." Was she not a free woman—without even a guardian to trouble her with advice? She had no excuse to act ignobly!—But had she any for being unmaidenly?—Would it then be—would it be a *very* unmaidenly thing if——? The rest of the sentence did not take even the shape of words. But she answered it nevertheless in the words: "Not so unmaidenly as presumptuous." And alas there was little hope that *he* would ever presume to—? He was such a modest youth with all his directness and fearlessness! If he had no respect for rank,—and that was—yes, she would say the word, *hopeful*—he had, on the other hand, the profoundest respect for the human, and she could not tell how that might, in the individual matter, operate.

Then she fell a-thinking of the difference between Malcolm and any other servant she had ever known. She hated the *servile*. She knew that it was false as well as low: she had not got so far as to see that it was low through its being false. She knew that most servants, while they spoke with the appearance of respect in presence, altered their tone entirely when beyond the circle of the eye—theirs was eye-service—they were men-pleasers—they were servile. She had overheard her maid speak of her as Lady Clem, and that not without a streak of contempt in the tone. But here was a man who touched no imaginary hat while he stood in the presence of his mistress, neither swore at her in the stable-yard. He looked her straight in the face, and would upon occasion speak—not his *mind*—but the truth to her. Even his slight mistress had the conviction that if one dared in his presence but utter her name lightly, whoever he were he would have to answer to him for it. What a lovely thing was true service!—Absolutely divine! But, alas, such a youth would never, could never dare offer other than such service! Were she even to encourage him as a maiden might, he would but serve her the better—would but embody his recognition of her favour, in fervour of ministering devotion.—Was is not a recognized law, however, in the relation of superiors and inferiors, that with regard to such matters as well as others of no moment, the lady—?——Ah, but! for her to take the initiative, would provoke the conclusion—as revolting to her as unavoidable to him—that she judged herself his superior—so greatly his superior as to be absolved from the necessity of behaving to him on the ordinary footing of man and woman. What a ground to start from with a husband! The idea was hateful to her. She tried the argument that such a procedure arrogated merely a superiority in social standing; but it made her recoil from it the more. He was so immeasurably her superior, that the poor little advantage on her side vanished like a candle in the sunlight, and she laughed herself to scorn. "Fancy," she laughed, "a midge, on the strength of having wings, condescending to offer marriage to a horse!" It would argue the assumption of equality in other and more important things than rank, or at least the confidence that her social superiority not only counterbalanced the difference, but left enough over to her credit to justify her initiative. And what a miserable fiction that money and position had a right to the first move before greatness of living fact! that *having* had the precedence of being! That Malcolm should imagine such *her* judgment—No—let all go—let himself go rather! And then he might not choose to accept her munificent offer! Or worse—far worse!—what if he should be tempted by rank and wealth, and, accepting her, be shorn of his glory and proved of the ordinary human type after all! A thousand times rather would she see the bright particular star blazing unreachable above her! What! would she carry it about a cinder in her pocket?—And yet if he *could* be "turned to a coal," why should she go on worshipping him?—alas! the offer itself was the only test severe enough to try him withal, and if he proved a cinder, she would by the very use of the test be bound to love, honour, and obey her cinder. She could not well reject him for accepting her—neither could she marry him if he rose grandly superior to her temptations. No; he could be nothing to her nearer than the bright particular star.

Thus went the thoughts to and fro in the minds of each. Neither could see the way. Both feared the risk of loss. Neither could hope greatly for gain.

## CHAPTER LXII.

### THE DUNE.

HAVING put Kelpie up, and fed and bedded her, Malcolm took his way to the Seaton, full of busily anxious thought. Things had taken a bad turn, and he was worse off for counsel than before. The enemy was in the house with his sister, and he had no longer any chance of judging how matters were going, as now he never rode out with her. But at least he could haunt the house. He would run therefore to his grandfather, and tell him that he was going to occupy his old quarters at the House that night.

Returning directly and passing, as had been his custom, through the kitchen to ascend the small corkscrew stair the servants generally used, he encountered Mrs Courthope, who told him that her ladyship had given orders that her maid, who had come with Lady Bellair, should have his room. He was at once convinced that Florimel had done so with the intention of banishing him from the house, for there were dozens of rooms vacant, and many of them more suitable. It was a hard blow! How he wished for Mr Graham to consult! And yet Mr Graham was not of much use where any sort of plotting was wanted. He asked Mrs Courthope to let him have another room; but she looked so doubtful that he withdrew his request, and went back to his grandfather.

It was Saturday, and not many of the boats would go fishing. Findlay's would not leave the harbour till Sunday was over, and therefore Malcolm was free. But he could not rest, and would go line-fishing.

"Daddy," he said, "I'm gaein oot to catch a haddick or sae to oor denner the morn. Ye micht jist sit doon upo' ane o' the Boar's Taes, an' tak a play o' yer pipes. I'll hear ye fine, an' it'll du me guid."

The Boar's Toes were two or three small rocks that rose out of the sand near the end of the dune. Duncan agreed right willingly, and Malcolm, borrowing some lines, and taking the Psyche's dinghy, rowed out into the bay.

The sun was down, the moon was up, and he had caught more fish than he wanted. His grandfather had got tired, and gone home, and the fountain of his anxious thoughts began to flow more rapidly. He must go ashore. He must go up to the House: who could tell what might not be going on there? He drew in his line, purposing to take the best of the fish to Miss Horn, and some to Mrs Courthope, as in the old days.

The Psyche still lay on the sands, and he was rowing the dinghy towards her, when, looking round to direct his course, he thought he caught a glimpse of some one seated on the slope of the dune. Yes, there was some one there, sure enough. The old times rushed back on his memory: could it be Florimel? Alas! it was not likely she would now be wandering about alone! But if it were? Then for one endeavour more to rouse her slumbering conscience! He would call up all the associations of the last few months she had spent in the place, and, with the spirit of her father, as it were, hovering over her, conjure her, in his name, to break with Liftore.

He rowed swiftly to the Psyche—beached and drew up the dinghy, and climbed the dune. Plainly enough it was a lady who sat there. It might be one from the upper town, enjoying the lovely night; it *might* be Florimel, but how could she have got away, or wished to get away from her newly arrived guests? The voices of several groups of walkers came from the high road behind the dune, but there was no other figure to be seen all along the sands. He drew nearer. The lady did not move. If it were Florimel, would she not know him as he came, and would she wait for him?

He drew nearer still. His heart gave a throb. Could it be? Or was the moon weaving some hallucination in his troubled brain? If it was a phantom, it was that of Lady Clementina; if but modelled of the filmy vapours of the moonlight, and the artist his own brain, the phantom was welcome as joy! His spirit seemed to soar aloft in the yellow air, and hang hovering over and around her, while his body stood rooted to the spot, like one who fears by moving nigher to lose the lovely vision of a mirage. She sat motionless, her gaze on the sea. Malcolm bethought himself that she could not know him in his fisher-dress, and must take him for some rude fisherman staring at her. He must go at once, or approach and address her. He came forward at once.

"My lady!" he said.

She did not start. Neither did she speak. She did not even turn her face. She rose first, then turned, and held out her hand. Three steps more, and he had it in his, and his eyes looked straight into hers. Neither spoke. The moon shone full on Clementina's face. There was no illumination fitter for that face than the moonlight, and to Malcolm it was lovelier than ever. Nor was it any wonder it should seem so to him, for certainly never had the eyes in it rested on his with such a lovely and trusting light in them. A moment she stood, then slowly sank upon the sand, and drew her skirts about her with a dumb show of invitation. The place where she sat was a little terraced hollow in the slope, forming a convenient seat. Malcolm saw but could not believe she actually made room for him to sit beside her—alone with her in the universe. It was too much; he dared not believe it. And now by one of those wondrous duplications which are not always at least born of the fancy, the same scene in which he had found Florimel thus seated on the slope of the dune, appeared to be passing again through Malcolm's consciousness, only instead of Florimel was Clementina, and instead of the sun was the moon. And creature of the sunlight as Florimel was, bright and gay and beautiful, she paled into a creature of the cloud beside this maiden of the moonlight, tall and stately, silent and soft and grand.

Again she made a movement. This time he could not doubt her invitation. It was as if her soul made room in her unseen world for him to enter and sit beside her. But who could enter heaven in his work-day garments?

"Won't you sit by me, Malcolm?" seeing his more than hesitation, she said at last, with a slight tremble in the voice that was music itself in his ears.

"I have been catching fish, my lady," he answered, "and my clothes must be unpleasant. I will sit here."

He went a little lower on the slope, and laid himself down, leaning on his elbow.

"Do fresh water fishes smell the same as the sea-fishes, Malcolm?" she asked.

"Indeed I am not certain, my lady. Why?"

"Because if they do,——You remember what you said to me as we passed the saw-mill in the wood?"

It was by silence Malcolm showed he did remember.

"Does not this night remind you of that one at Waštbeach when we came upon you singing?" said Clementina.

"It *is* like it, my lady—now. But a little ago, before I saw you, I was thinking of that night, and thinking how different this was."

Again a moonfilled silence fell; and once more it was the lady who broke it.

"Do you know who are at the house?" she asked.

"I do, my lady," he replied.

"I had not been there more than an hour or two," she went on, "when they arrived. I suppose Florimel—Lady Lossie thought I would not come if she told me she expected them."

"And would you have come, my lady?"

"I cannot endure the earl."

"Neither can I. But then I know more about him than your ladyship does, and I am miserable for my mistress."

It stung Clementina as if her heart had taken a beat backward. But her voice was steadier than it had yet been as she returned—

"Why should you be miserable for Lady Lossie?"

"I would die rather than see her marry that wretch," he answered.

Again her blood stung her in the left side.

"You do not want her to marry, then?" she said.

"I do," answered Malcolm, emphatically, "but not that fellow."

"Whom then, if I may ask?" ventured Clementina, trembling.

But Malcolm was silent. He did not feel it would be right to say. Clementina turned sick at heart.

"I have heard there is something dangerous about the moonlight," she said. "I think it does not suit me to-night. I will go—home."

Malcolm sprung to his feet and offered his hand. She did not take it, but rose more lightly, though more slowly than he.

"How did you come from the park, my lady?" he asked.

"By a gate over there," she answered, pointing. "I wandered out after dinner, and the sea drew me."

"If your ladyship will allow me, I will take you a much nearer way back," he said.

"Do then," she returned.

He thought she spoke a little sadly, and set it down to her having to go back to her fellow-guests. What if she should leave to-morrow morning! he thought. He could never then be sure she had really been with him that night. He must then sometimes think it a dream. But oh, what a dream! He could thank God for it all his life, if he should never dream so again.

They walked across the grassy sand towards the tunnel in silence, he pondering what he could say that might comfort her and keep her from going so soon.

"My lady never takes me out with her now," he said at length.

He was going to add that, if she pleased, he could wait upon her with Kelpie, and show her the country. But then he saw that, if she were not with Florimel, his sister would be riding everywhere alone with Liftore. Therefore he stopped short.

"And you feel forsaken—deserted?" returned Clementina, sadly still.

"Rather, my lady."

They had reached the tunnel. It looked very black when he opened the door, but there was just a glimmer through the trees at the other end.

"This is the valley of the shadow of death," she said. "Do I walk straight through?"

"Yes, my lady. You will soon come out in the light again," he said.

"Are there no steps to fall down?" she asked.

"None, my lady. But I will go first if you wish."

"No, that would but cut off the little light I have," she said. "Come beside me."

They passed through in silence, save for the rustle of her dress, and the dull echo that haunted their steps. In a few moments they came out among the trees, but both continued silent. The still, thoughtful moon-night seemed to press them close together, but neither knew that the other felt the same.

They reached a point in the road where another step would bring them in sight of the house.

"You cannot go wrong now, my lady," said Malcolm. "If you please I will go no farther."

"Do you not live in the house?" she asked.

"I used to do as I liked, and could be there or with my grandfather. I did mean to be at the House to-night, but my lady has given my room to her maid."

"What! that woman Caley?"

"I suppose so, my lady. I must sleep to-night in the village. If you could, my lady," he added, after a pause, and faltered, hesitating. She did not help him, but waited. "If you could—if you would not be displeased at my asking you," he resumed, "—if you *could* keep my lady from going farther with that—I shall call him names if I go on!"

"It is a strange request," Clementina replied, after a moment's reflection. "I hardly know, as the guest of Lady Lossie, what answer I ought to make to it. One thing I will say, however, that, though you may know more of the man than I, you can hardly dislike him more. Whether I can interfere is another matter. Honestly, I do not think it would be of any use. But I do not say I will not. Good night."

She hurried away, and did not again offer her hand.

Malcolm walked back through the tunnel, his heart singing and making melody. Oh how lovely, how more than lovely, how divinely beautiful she was! And so kind and friendly! Yet she seemed just the least bit fitful too. Something troubled her, he said to himself. But he little thought that he, and no one else, had spoiled the moonlight for her. He went home to glorious dreams—she to a troubled half wakeful night. Not until she had made up her mind to do her utmost to rescue Florimel from Liftore, even if it gave her to Malcolm, did she find a moment's quiet. It was morning then, but she fell fast asleep, slept late, and woke refreshed.

# CHAPTER LXIII.

## CONFESSION OF SIN.

Mr Crathie was slowly recovering, but still very weak. He did not, after having turned the corner, get well so fast as his medical minister judged he ought, and the reason was plain to Lizzy, dimly perceptible to his wife: he was ill at ease. A man may have more mind and more conscience, and more discomfort in both or either, than his neighbours give him credit for. They may be in the right about him up to a certain point in his history, but then a crisis, by them unperceived, perhaps to them inappreciable, arrived, after which the man to all eternity could never be the same as they had known him. Such a change must appear improbable, and save on the theory of a higher operative power, is improbable because impossible. But a man who has not created himself, can never secure himself against the inroad of the glorious terror of that Goodness which was able to utter him into being, with all its possible wrongs and repentances. The fact that a man has never, up to any point yet, been aware of aught beyond himself, cannot shut him out who is beyond him, when at last he means to enter. Not even the soul-benumbing visits of his clerical minister could repress the swell of the slow-mounting day-spring in the soul of the hard, commonplace, business-worshipping man, Hector Crathie. The hireling would talk to him kindly enough—of his illness, or of events of the day, especially those of the town and neighbourhood, and encourage him with reiterated expression of the hope that ere many days they would enjoy a tumbler together as of old, but as to wrong done, apology to make, forgiveness to be sought, or consolation to be found, the dumb dog had not uttered a bark.

The sources of the factor's restless discomfort were now two; the first, that he had lifted his hand to women; the second, the old ground of his quarrel with Malcolm, brought up by Lizzy.

All his life, since ever he had had business, Mr Crathie had prided himself on his honesty, and was therefore in one of the most dangerous moral positions a man could occupy—ruinous even to the honesty itself. Asleep in the mud, he dreamed himself awake on a pedestal. At best such a man is but perched on a needle point when he thinketh he standeth. Of him who prided himself on his honour I should expect that one day, in the long run it might be, he would do some vile thing. Not, probably, within the small circle of illumination around his wretched rushlight, but in the great region beyond it, of what to him is a moral darkness, or twilight vague, he may be or may become capable of doing a deed that will stink in the nostrils of the universe—and in his own when he knows it as it is. The honesty in which a man can pride himself must be a small one, for more honesty will ever reveal more defect, while perfect honesty will never think of itself at all. The limited honesty of the factor clave to the interests of his employers, and let the rights he encountered take care of themselves. Those he dealt with were to him rather as enemies than friends, not enemies to be prayed for, but to be spoiled. Malcolm's doctrine of honesty in horse-dealing was to him ludicrously new. His notion of honesty in that kind was to cheat the buyer for his master if he could, proud to write in his book a large sum against the name of the animal. He would have scorned in his very soul the idea of making a farthing by it himself through any business quirk whatever, but he would not have been the least ashamed if, having sold Kelpie, he had heard—let me say after a week of possession—that she had dashed out her purchaser's brains. He would have been a little shocked, a little sorry perhaps, but nowise ashamed. "By this time," he would have said, "the man ought to have been up to her, and either taken care of himself—or *sold her again*,"—to dash out another man's brains instead!

That the bastard Malcolm, or the ignorant and indeed fallen fisher-girl Lizzy, should judge differently, nowise troubled him: what could they know about the rights and wrongs of business? The fact which Lizzy sought to bring to bear upon him, that our Lord would not have done such a thing, was to him no argument at all. He said to himself, with the superior smile of arrogated common-sense, that "no mere man since the fall" could be expected to do like him; that he was divine, and had not to fight for a living; that he set us an example that we might see what sinners we were; that religion was one thing, and a very proper thing, but business was another, and a very proper thing also—with customs and indeed laws of its own far more determinate, at least definite, than those of religion, and that to mingle the one with the other was not merely absurd—it was irreverent and wrong, and certainly never intended in the Bible, which must surely be common sense. It was *the Bible* always with him,—never *the will of Christ*. But although he could dispose of the question thus satisfactorily, yet, as he lay ill, supine, without any distracting occupation, the thing haunted him.

Now in his father's cottage had lain, much dabbled in of the children, a certain boardless copy of the Pilgrim's Progress round in the face and hollow in the back, in which, amongst other pictures, was one of the Wicket-gate. This scripture of his childhood, given by inspiration of God, threw out, in one of his troubled and feverish nights, a dream-bud in the brain of the man. He saw the face of Jesus looking on him over the top of the Wicket-gate, at which he had been for some time knocking in vain, while the cruel dog barked loud from the enemy's yard. But that face, when at last it came, was full of sorrowful displeasure. And in his heart he knew that it was because of a certain transaction in horse-dealing, wherein he had hitherto lauded his own cunning—adroitness, he considered it—and success. One word only he heard from the lips of the Man—"Worker of iniquity,"—and woke with a great start. From that moment truths *began* to be facts to him. The beginning of the change was indeed very small, but every beginning is small, and every beginning is a creation. Monad, molecule, protoplasm, whatever word may be attached to it when it becomes appreciable by men, being then, however, many stages, I believe, upon its journey, beginning is an irrepressible fact; and however far from good or humble even after many days, the man here began to grow good and humble. His dull unimaginative nature, a perfect lumber-room of the world and its rusting affairs, had received a gift in a dream—a truth from the lips of the Lord, remodelled in the brain and heart of the tinker of Elstow, and sent forth in his wondrous parable to be pictured and printed, and lie in old Hector Crathie's cottage, that it might enter and lie in young Hector Crathie's brain until he grew old and had done wrong enough to heed it, when it rose upon him in a dream, and had its way. Henceforth the claims of his neighbour began to reveal themselves, and his mind to breed conscientious doubts and scruples, with which, struggle as he might against it, a certain respect for Malcolm would keep coming and mingling—a feeling which grew with its returns, until, by slow changes, he began at length to regard him as the minister of God's vengeance—for his punishment,—and perhaps salvation—who could tell?

Lizzy's nightly ministrations had not been resumed, but she often called, and was a good deal with him; for Mrs Crathie had learned to like the humble, helpful girl still better when she found she had taken no offence at being deprived of her post of honour by his bedside. One day, when Malcolm was seated, mending a net, among the thin grass and great red daisies of the links by the bank of the burn, where it crossed the sands from the Lossie grounds to the sea, Lizzy came up to him and said, "The factor wad like to see ye, Ma'colm, as sune's ye can gang till 'im."

She waited no reply. Malcolm rose and went.

At the factor's, the door was opened by Mrs Crathie herself, who, looking mysterious, led him to the dining-room, where she plunged at once into business, doing her best to keep down all manifestation of the profound resentment she cherished against him. Her manner was confidential, almost coaxing.

"Ye see, Ma'colm," she said, as if pursuing instead of commencing a conversation, "he's some sore about the little *fraicass* between him 'an you. Jest make your apoalogies till 'im and tell 'im you had a drop too much, and your soary for misbehavin' yerself to wann sae much your shuperrior. Tell him that, Ma'colm, an' there's a half-croon to ye."

She wished much to speak English, and I have tried to represent the thing she did speak, which was neither honest Scotch nor anything like English. Alas! the good, pithy, old Anglo-saxon dialect is fast perishing, and a jargon of corrupt English taking its place.

"But, mem," said Malcolm, taking no notice either of the coin or the words that accompanied the offer of it, "I canna lee. I wasna in drink, an' I'm no sorry."

"Hoot!" returned Mrs Crathie, blurting out her Scotch fast enough now, "I's warran' ye can lee well eneuch whan ye ha'e occasion. Tak' yer siller, 'an' du as I tell ye."

"Wad ye ha'e me damned, mem?"

Mrs Crathie gave a cry and held up her hands. She was too well accustomed to imprecations from the lips of her husband for any but an affected horror, but, regarding the honest word as a bad one, she assumed an air of injury.

"Wad ye daur to sweir afore a leddy," she exclaimed, shaking her uplifted hands in pretence of ghasted astonishment.

"If Mr Crathie wishes to see me, ma'am," rejoined Malcolm, taking up the shield of English, "I am ready. If not, please allow me to go."

The same moment the bell whose rope was at the head of the factor's bed, rang violently, and Mrs Crathie's importance collapsed.

"Come this w'y," she said, and turning led him up the stair to the room where her husband lay.

Entering, Malcolm stood astonished at the change he saw upon the strong man of rubicund countenance, and his heart filled with compassion. The factor was sitting up in bed, looking very white and worn and troubled. Even his nose had grown thin and white. He held out his hand to him, and said to his wife, "Tak the door to ye, Mistress Crathie," indicating which side he wished it closed from.

"Ye was some sair upo' me, Ma'colm," he went on, grasping the youth's hand.

"I doobt I was *ower* sair," said Malcolm, who could hardly speak for a lump in his throat.

"Weel, I deserved it. But eh, Ma'colm! I canna believe it was me: it bude to be the drink."

"It *was* the drink," rejoined Malcolm; "an' eh sir! afore ye rise frae that bed, sweir to the great God 'at ye'll never drink nae mair drams, nor onything 'ayont ae tum'ler at a sittin'."

"I sweir't; I sweir't, Ma'colm!" cried the factor.

"It's easy to sweir't noo, sir, but whan ye're up again it'll be hard to keep yer aith.—O Lord!" spoke the youth, breaking out into almost involuntary prayer, "help this man to haud troth wi' thee.—An' noo, Maister Crathie," he resumed, "I'm yer servan', ready to do onything I can. Forgi'e me, sir, for layin' on ower sair."

"I forgi'e ye wi' a' my hert," returned the factor, inly delighted to have something to forgive.

"I thank ye frae mine," answered Malcolm, and again they shook hands.

"But eh, Ma'colm, my man!" said the factor, "hoo will I ever shaw my face again?"

"Fine that!" returned Malcolm, eagerly. "Fowk's terrible guid-natur'd whan ye alloo 'at ye're i' the wrang. I do believe 'at whan a man confesses till 's neebour, an' says he's sorry, he thinks mair o' 'im nor afore he did it. Ye see we a' ken we ha'e dune wrang, but we ha'ena a' confessed. An' it's a queer thing, but a man'll think it gran' o' 's neebour to confess, whan a' the time there's something he winna repent o' himsel' for fear o' the *shame* o' ha'ein' to confess 't. To me, the shame lies in *no* confessin' efter ye ken ye're wrang. Ye'll see, sir, the fisher-fowk ill min' what ye say to them a heap better noo."

"Div ye railly think it, Ma'colm?" sighed the factor with a flush.

"I div that, sir. Only whan ye grow better, gien ye'll alloo me to say't, sir, ye maunna lat Sawtan temp' ye to think 'at this same repentin' was but a wakeness o' the flesh, an' no an enlichtenment o' the speerit."

"I s' tie mysel' up till 't," cried the factor, eagerly. "Gang an' tell them i' my name, 'at I tak' back ilka scart o' a nottice I ever ga'e ane o' them to quit, only we maun ha'e nae mair stan'in' o' honest fowk 'at comes to bigg herbours till them.—Div ye think it wad be weel ta'en gien ye tuik a poun'-nott the piece to the twa women?"

"I wadna du that, sir, gien I was you," answered Malcolm. "For yer ain sake, I wadna to Mistress Mair, for naething wad gar her tak' it—it wad only affront her; an' for Nancy Tacket's sake, I wanda to her, for as her name so's her natur'; she wad not only tak it, but she wad lat ye play the same as aften 's ye likit for less siller. Ye'll ha'e mony a chance o' makin' 't up to them baith, ten times ower, afore you an' them pairt, sir."

"I maun lea' the cuintry, Ma'colm."

"'Deed, sir, ye'll du naething o' the kin'. The fishers themsel's wad rise, no to lat ye, as they did wi' Blew Peter! As sune's ye're able to be aboot again, ye'll see plain eneuch 'at there's no occasion for onything like that, sir. Portlossie wadna ken 'tsel' wantin' ye. Jist gie me a commission to say to the twa honest women 'at ye're sorry for what ye did, an' that's a' 'at need be said 'atween you an' them, or their men aither."

The result showed that Malcolm was right; for, the very next day, instead of looking for gifts from him, the two injured women came to the factor's door, first Annie Mair, with the offering of a few fresh eggs, scarce at the season, and after her Nancy Tacket, with a great lobster.

## CHAPTER LXIV.

### A VISITATION.

Malcolm's custom was, first, immediately after breakfast, to give Kelpie her airing—and a tremendous amount of air she wanted for the huge animal furnace of her frame, and the fiery spirit that kept it alight; then, returning to the Seaton, to change the dress of the groom, in which he always appeared about the house, lest by any chance his mistress should want him, for that of the fisherman, and help with the nets, or the boats, or in whatever was going on. As often as he might he did what seldom a man would—went to the long shed where the women prepared the fish for salting, took a knife, and wrought as deftly as any of them, throwing a marvellously rapid succession of cleaned herrings into the preserving brine. It was no wonder he was a favourite with the women. Although, however, the place was malodorous and the work dirty, I cannot claim so much for Malcolm as may at first appear to belong to him, for he had been accustomed to the sight and smell from earliest childhood. Still, as I say, it was work the men would not do. He had such a chivalrous humanity that it was misery to him to see man or woman at anything scorned, except he bore a hand himself. He did it half in love, half in terror of being unjust.

He had gone to Mr Crathie in his fisher clothes, thinking it better the sick man should not be reminded of the cause of his illness more forcibly than could not be helped. The nearest way led past a corner of the house overlooked by one of the drawing-room windows; Clementina saw him, and, judging by his garb that he would probably return presently, went out in the hope of meeting him; and as he was going back to his net by the sea-gate, he caught sight of her on the opposite side of the burn, accompanied only by a book. He walked through the burn, climbed the bank, and approached her.

It was a hot summer afternoon. The burn ran dark and brown and cool in deep shade, but the sea beyond was glowing in light, and the laburnum-blossoms hung like cocoons of sunbeams. No breath of air was stirring; no bird sang; the sun was burning high in the west. Clementina stood waiting him, like a moon that could hold her own in the face of the sun.

"Malcolm," she said, "I have been watching all day, but have not found a single opportunity of speaking to your mistress as you wished. But to tell the truth, I am not sorry, for the more I think about it, the less I see what to say. That another does not like a person, can have little weight with one who does, and I *know* nothing against him. I wish you would release me from my promise. It is such an ugly thing to speak to one's hostess to the disadvantage of a fellow-guest!"

"I understand," said Malcolm. "It was not a right thing to ask of you. I beg your pardon, my lady, and give you back your promise, if such you count it. But indeed I do not think you promised."

"Thank you, I would rather be free. Had it been before you left London—. —Lady Lossie is very kind, but does not seem to put the same confidence in me as formerly. She and Lady Bellair and that man make a trio, and I am left outside. I almost think I ought to go. Even Caley is more of a friend than I am. I cannot get rid of the suspicion that something not right is going on. There seems a bad air about the place. Those two are playing their game with the inexperience of that poor child, your mistress."

"I know that very well, my lady, but I hope yet they will not win," said Malcolm.

By this time they were near the tunnel.

"Could you let me through to the shore?" asked Clementina.

"Certainly, my lady.—I wish you could see the boats go out. From the Boar's Tail it is a pretty sight. They will all be starting together as soon as the tide turns."

Thereupon Clementina began questioning him about the night-fishing, and Malcolm described its pleasures and dangers, and the pleasures of its dangers, in such fashion that Clementina listened with delight. He dwelt especially on the feeling almost of disembodiment, and existence as pure thought, arising from the all-pervading clarity and fluidity, the suspension, and the unceasing motion.

"I wish I could once feel like that," exclaimed Clementina. "Could I not go with you—for one night—just for once, Malcolm?"

"My lady, it would hardly do, I am afraid. If you knew the discomforts that must assail one unaccustomed—I cannot tell—but I doubt if you would go. All the doors to bliss have their defences of swamps and thorny thickets through which alone they can be gained. You would need to be a fisherman's sister—or wife, I fear, my lady, to get through to this one."

Clementina smiled gravely, but did not reply, and Malcolm too was silent, thinking.

"Yes," he said at last; "I see how we can manage it. You shall have a boat for your own use, my lady, and——"

"But I want to see just what you see, and to feel, as nearly as I may, what you feel. I don't want a downy, rose-leaf notion of the thing. I want to understand what you fishermen encounter and experience."

"We must make a difference though, my lady. Look what clothes, what boots we fishers must wear to be fit for our work! But you shall have a true idea as far as it reaches, and one that will go a long way towards enabling you to understand the rest. You shall go in a real fishing-boat, with a full crew and all the nets, and you shall catch real herrings; only you shall not be out longer than you please.—But there is hardly time to arrange for it to-night, my lady."

"To-morrow then?"

"Yes. I have no doubt I can manage it then."

"Oh, thank you!" said Clementina. "It will be a great delight."

"And now," suggested Malcolm, "would you like to go through the village, and see some of the cottages, and how the fishers live?"

"If they would not think me inquisitive, or intrusive," answered Clementina.

"There is no danger of that," rejoined Malcolm. "If it were my Lady Bellair, to patronize, and deal praise and blame, as if what she calls poverty were fault and childishness, and she their spiritual as well as social superior, they might very likely be what she would call rude. She was here once before, and we have some notion of her about the Seaton. I venture to say there is not a woman in it who is not her moral superior, and many of them are her superiors in intellect and true knowledge, if they are not so familiar with London scandal. Mr Graham says that in the kingdom of heaven every superior is a ruler, for there to rule is to raise, and a man's rank is his power to uplift."

"I would I were in the kingdom of heaven, if it be such as you and Mr Graham take it for," said Clementina.

"You must be in it, my lady, or you couldn't wish it to be such as it is."

"Can one then be in it, and yet seem to be out of it, Malcolm?"

"So many are out of it that seem to be in it, my lady, that one might well imagine it the other way with some."

"Are you not uncharitable, Malcolm?"

"Our Lord speaks of many coming up to his door confident of admission, whom yet he sends from him. Faith is obedience, not confidence."

"Then I do well to fear."

"Yes, my lady, so long as your fear makes you knock the louder."

"But if I be in, as you say, how can I go on knocking?"

"There are a thousand more doors to knock at after you are in, my lady. No one content to stand just inside the gate will be inside it long. But it is one thing to be in, and another to be satisfied that we are in. Such a satisfying as comes from our own feelings may, you see from what our Lord says, be a false one. It is one thing to gather the conviction for ourselves, and another to have it from God. What wise man would have it before he gives it? He who does what his Lord tells him, is in the kingdom, if every feeling of heart or brain told him he was out. And his Lord will see that he knows it one day. But I do not think, my lady, one can ever be quite sure, until the king himself has come in to sup with him, and has let him know that he is altogether one with him."

During the talk of which this is the substance, they reached the Seaton, and Malcolm took her to see his grandfather.

"Taal and faer and chentle and coot!" murmured the old man as he held her hand for a moment in his. With a start of suspicion he dropped it, and cried out in alarm—"She'll not pe a Cam'ell, Malcolm?"

"Na, na, daddy—far frae that," answered Malcolm.

"Then my laty will pe right welcome to Tuncan's heart," he replied, and taking her hand again led her to a chair.

When they left, she expressed herself charmed with the piper, but when she learned the cause of his peculiar behaviour at first, she looked grave, and found his feeling difficult to understand.

They next visited the Partaness, with whom she was far more amused than puzzled. But her heart was drawn to the young woman who sat in a corner, rocking her child in its wooden cradle, and never lifting her eyes from her needle-work: she knew her for the fisher-girl of Malcolm's picture.

From house to house he took her, and where they went, they were welcomed. If the man was smoking, he put away his pipe, and the woman left her work and sat down to talk with her. They did the honours of their poor houses in a homely and dignified fashion. Clementina was delighted. But Malcolm told her he had taken her only to the best houses in the place to begin with. The village, though a fair sample of fishing villages, was no ex-sample, he said: there were all kinds of people in it as in every other. It was a class in the big life-school of the world, whose special masters were the sea and the herrings.

"What would you do now, if you were lord of the place?" asked Clementina, as they were walking back by the sea-gate; "—I mean, what would be the first thing you would do?"

"As it would be my business to know my tenants that I might rule them," he answered, "I would first court the society and confidence of the best men among them. I should be in no hurry to make changes, but would talk openly with them, and try to be worthy of their confidence. Of course I would see a little better to their houses, and improve their harbour: and I would build a boat for myself that would show them a better kind; but my main hope for them would be the same as for myself—the knowledge of him whose is the sea and all its store, who cares for every fish in its bosom, but for the fisher more than many herrings. I would spend my best efforts to make them follow him whose first servants were the fishermen of Galilee, for with all my heart I believe that that Man holds the secret of life, and that only the man who obeys him can ever come to know the

God who is the root and crown of our being, and whom to know is freedom and bliss."

A pause followed.

"But do you not sometimes find it hard to remember God all through your work?" asked Clementina.

"Not very hard, my lady. Sometimes I wake up to find that I have been in an evil mood and forgetting him, and then life is hard until I get near him again. But it is not my work that makes me forget him. When I go a-fishing, I go to catch God's fish; when I take Kelpie out, I am teaching one of God's wild creatures; when I read the Bible or Shakspere, I am listening to the word of God, uttered in each after its kind. When the wind blows on my face, what matter that the chymist pulls it to pieces! He cannot hurt it, for his knowledge of it cannot make my feeling of it a folly, so long as he cannot pull that to pieces with his retorts and crucibles: it is to me the wind of him who makes it blow, the sign of something in him, the fit emblem of his spirit, that breathes into my spirit the breath of life. When Mr Graham talks to me, it is a prophet come from God that teaches me, as certainly as if his fiery chariot were waiting to carry him back when he had spoken; for the word he utters at once humbles and uplifts my soul, telling it that God is all in all and my God—that the Lord Christ is the truth and the life, and the way home to the Father."

After a little pause,

"And when you are talking to a rich, ignorant, proud lady?" said Clementina, "—what do you feel then?"

"That I would it were my lady Clementina instead," answered Malcolm with a smile.

She held her peace.

When he left her, Malcolm hurried to Scaurnose and arranged with Blue Peter for his boat and crew the next night. Returning to his grandfather, he found a note waiting him from Mrs. Courthope, to the effect that, as Miss Caley, her ladyship's maid, had preferred another room, there was no reason why, if he pleased, he should not re-occupy his own.

## CHAPTER LXV.

### THE EVE OF THE CRISIS.

It was late in the sweetest of summer mornings when the Partan's boat slipped slowly back with a light wind to the harbour of Portlossie. Malcolm did not wait to land the fish, but having changed his clothes and taken breakfast with Duncan who was always up early, went to look after Kelpie. When he had done with her, finding some of the household already in motion, he went through the kitchen, and up the old cork-screw stone stair to his room to have the sleep he generally had before his breakfast. Presently came a knock at his door, and there was Rose.

The girl's behaviour to Malcolm was much changed. The conviction had been strengthened in her that he was not what he seemed, and she regarded him now with a vague awe. She looked this way and that along the passage, with fear in her eyes, then stepped timidly inside the room to tell him, in a hurried whisper, that she had seen the woman who gave her the poisonous philtre, talking to Caley the night before, at the foot of the bridge, after everybody else was in bed. She had been miserable till she could warn him. He thanked her heartily, and said he would be on his guard; he would neither eat nor drink in the house. She crept softly away. He secured the door, lay down, and trying to think fell asleep.

When he woke his brain was clear. The very next day, whether Lenorme came or not, he would declare himself. That night he would go fishing with Lady Clementina, but not one day longer would he allow those people to be about his sister. Who could tell what might not be brewing, or into what abyss, with the help of her *friends*, the woman Catanach might not plunge Florimel?

He rose, took Kelpie out, and had a good gallop. On his way back he saw in the distance Florimel riding with Liftore. The earl was on his father's bay mare. He could not endure the sight, and dashed home at full speed.

Learning from Rose that Lady Clementina was in the flower-garden, he found her at the swan-basin, feeding the gold and silver fishes. An under-gardener who had been about the place for thirty years, was at work not far off. The light splash of the falling column which the marble swan spouted from its upturned beak, prevented her from hearing his approach until he was close behind her. She turned, and her fair face took the flush of a white rose,

"My lady," he said, "I have got everything arranged for to-night."

"And when shall we go?" she asked eagerly.

"At the turn of the tide, about half-past seven. But seven is your dinner hour."

"It is of no consequence.—But could you not make it half an hour later, and then I should not seem rude?"

"Make it any hour you please, my lady, so long as the tide is falling."

"Let it be eight then, and dinner will be almost over. They will not miss me after that. Mr Cairns is going to dine with them. I think, except Liftore, I never disliked a man so much. Shall I tell them where I am going?"

"Yes, my lady. It will be better.—They will look amazed—for all their breeding!"

"Whose boat is it, that I may be able to tell them if they should ask me?"

"Joseph Mair's. He and his wife will come and fetch you. Annie Mair will go with us—if I may say *us:* will you allow me to go in your boat, my lady?"

"I couldn't go without you, Malcom."

"Thank you, my lady. Indeed I don't know how I could let you go without me! Not that there is anything to fear, or that I could make it the least safer; but somehow it seems my business to take care of you."

"Like Kelpie?" said Clementina, with a merrier smile than he had ever seen on her face before.

"Yes, my lady," answered Malcolm; "—if to do for you all and the best you will permit me to do, be to take care of you like Kelpie, then so it is."

Clementina gave a little sigh.

"Mind you don't scruple, my lady, to give what orders you please. It will be *your* fishing-boat for to-night."

Clementina bowed her head in acknowledgment.

"And now, my lady," Malcolm went on, "just look about you for a moment. See this great vault of heaven, full of golden light raining on trees and flowers—every atom of air shining. Take the whole into your heart, that you may feel the difference at night, my lady—when the stars, and neither sun nor moon, will be in the sky, and all the flowers they shine on will be their own flitting, blinking, swinging, shutting and opening reflections in the swaying floor of the ocean,—when the heat will be gone, and the air clean and clear as the thoughts of a saint."

Clementina did as he said, and gazed above and around her on the glory of the summer day overhanging the sweet garden, and on the flowers that had just before been making her heart ache with their unattainable secret. But she thought with herself that if Malcolm and she but shared it with a common heart as well as neighboured eyes, gorgeous day and ethereal night, or snow-clad wild and sky of stormy blackness, were alike welcome to her spirit.

As they talked they wandered up the garden, and had drawn near the spot where, in the side of the glen, was hollowed the cave of the hermit. They now turned towards the pretty arbour of moss that covered its entrance, each thinking the other led, but Malcolm not without reluctance. For how horribly and unaccountably had he not been shaken, the only time he ever entered it, at the sight of the hermit! The thing was a foolish wooden figure no doubt, but the thought that it still sat over its book in the darkest corner of the cave, ready to rise and advance with outstretched hand to welcome its visitor, had, ever since then, sufficed to make him shudder. He was on the point of warning Clementina lest she too should be worse than startled, when he was arrested by the voice of John Jack, the old gardener, who came stooping after them, looking a sexton of flowers.

"Ma'colm, Ma'colm!" he cried, and crept up wheezing. "—I beg yer leddyship's pardon, my leddy, but I wadna ha'e Ma'colm lat ye gang in there ohn tellt ye what there is inside."

"Thank you, John. I was just going to tell my lady," said Malcolm.

"Because, ye see," pursued John, "I was ae day here i' the gairden—an' I was jist graftin' a bonny wull rose-buss wi' a Hector o' France—an' it grew to be the bonniest rose-buss in a' the haill gairden—whan the markis, no the auld markis, but my leddy's father, cam' up the walk there, an' a bonny young leddy wi' his lordship, as it micht be yersel's twa—an'I beg yer pardon, my leddy, but I'm an auld man noo, an' whiles forgets the differs 'atween fowk—an' this yoong leddy 'at they ca'd Miss Cam'ell—ye kenned her yersel' efterhin', I daursay, Ma'colm—he was unco ta'en with her, the markis, as ilka body cud see ohn luikit that near, sae 'at some said 'at hoo he hed no richt to gang on wi' her that gait, garrin' her believe, gien he wasna gaein' to merry her. That's naither here nor there, hooever, seein' it a' cam' to jist naething ava'. Sae up they gaed to the cave yon'er, as I was tellin' ye; an' hoo it was, was a won'er, for I 's warran' she had been aboot the place near a towmon (*twelvemonth*), but never had she been intil that cave, and kenned no more nor the bairn unborn what there was in 't. An' sae whan the airemite, as the auld minister ca'd him, though what for he ca'd a muckle block like yon an *airy mite*, I'm sure I never cud fathom—whan he gat up, as I was sayin', an' cam' foret wi' his han' oot, she gae a scraich 'at jist garred my lugs dirl, an' doon she drappit, an' there, whan I ran up, was she lyin' i' the markis his airms, as white 's a cauk eemege, an' it was lang or he brought her till hersel', for he wadna lat me rin for the hoosekeeper, but sent me fleein' to the f'untain for watter, an' gied me a gowd guinea to haud my tongue aboot it a'. Sae noo, my leddy, ye're forewarnt, an' no ill can come to ye, for there's naething to be fleyt at whan ye ken what's gauin' to meet ye."

Malcolm had turned his head aside, and now moved on without remark. Struck by his silence, Clementina looked up, and saw his face very pale, and the tears standing in his eyes.

"You must tell me the sad story, Malcolm," she murmured. "I could scarcely understand a word the old man said."

He continued silent, and seemed struggling with some emotion. But when they were within a few paces of the arbour, he stopped short, and said—

"I would rather not go in there to-day. You would oblige me, my lady, if you would not go."

She looked up at him again, with wonder but more concern in her lovely face, put her hand on his arm, gently turned him away, and walked back with him to the fountain. Not a word more did she say about the matter.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

### SEA.

The evening came; and the company at Lossie House was still seated at table, Clementina heartily weary of the vapid talk that had been going on all through the dinner, when she was informed that a fisherman of the name of Mair was at the door, accompanied by his wife, saying they had an appointment with her. She had already acquainted her hostess, when first they sat down, with her arrangements for going a-fishing that night, and much foolish talk and would-be wit had followed; now, when she rose and excused herself, they all wished her a pleasant evening, in a tone indicating the conviction that she little knew what she was about, and would soon be longing heartily enough to be back with them in the drawing-room, whose lighted windows she would see from the boat. But Clementina hoped otherwise, hurriedly changed her dress, hastened to join Malcolm's messengers, and almost in a moment had made the two child-like people at home with her, by the simplicity and truth of her manner, and the directness of her utterance. They had not talked with her five minutes before they said in their hearts that here was the wife for the marquis if he could get her.

"She's jist like ane o' oorsel's," whispered Annie to her husband on the first opportunity, "only a hantle better an' bonnier."

They took the nearest way to the harbour—through the town, and Lady Clementina and Blue Peter kept up a constant talk as they went. All in the streets and at the windows stared to see the grand lady from the House walking between a Scaurnose fisherman and his wife, and chatting away with them as if they were all fishers together.

"What's the wordle comin' till!" cried Mrs Mellis, the draper's wife, as she saw them pass.

"I'm glaid to see the yoong wuman—an' a bonny lass she is!—in sic guid company," said Miss Horn, looking down from the opposite side of the way. "I'm thinkin' the han' o' the markis 'ill be i' this, no'!"

All was ready to receive her, but in the present bad state of the harbour, and the tide having now ebbed a little way, the boat could not get close either to quay or shore. Six of the crew were on board, seated on the thwarts with their oars shipped, for Peter had insisted on a certain approximation to man-of-war manners and discipline for the evening, or at least until they got to the fishing ground. The shore itself formed one side of the harbour, and sloped down into it, and on the sand stood Malcolm with a young woman, whom Clementina recognised at once as the girl she had seen at the Findlays'.

"My lady," he said, approaching, "would you do me the favour to let Lizzy go with you. She would like to attend your ladyship, because, being a fisherman's daughter, she is used to the sea, and Mrs Mair is not so much at home upon it, being a farmer's daughter from inland."

Receiving Clementina's thankful assent, he turned to Lizzy and said—

"Min' ye tell my lady what rizon ye ken whaurfor my mistress at the Hoose sudna be merried upo' Lord Liftore—him 'at was

Lord Meikleham. Ye may speyk to my lady there as ye wad to mysel'—an' better, haein' the hert o' a wuman."

Lizzy blushed a deep red, and dared but the glimmer of a glance at Clementina, but there was only shame, no annoyance in her face.

"Ye winna repent it, Lizzy," concluded Malcolm, and turned away.

He cherished a faint hope that, if she heard or guessed Lizzy's story, Clementina might yet find some way of bringing her influence to bear on his sister even at the last hour of her chance—from which, for her sake, he shrunk the more the nearer it drew. Clementina held out her hand to Lizzy, and again accepted her offered service with kindly thanks.

Now Blue Peter, having been ship's-carpenter in his day, had constructed a little poop in the stern of his craft; thereon Malcolm had laid cushions and pillows and furs and blankets from the Psyche,—a grafting of Cleopatra's galley upon the rude fishing-boat—and there Clementina was to repose in state. Malcolm gave a sign: Peter took his wife in his arms, and walking through the few yards of water between, lifted her into the boat, which lay with its stern to the shore. Malcolm and Clementina turned to each other: he was about to ask leave to do her the same service, but she spoke before him.

"Put Lizzy on board first," she said.

He obeyed, and when, returning, he again approached her—

"Are you able, Malcolm?" she asked. "I am very heavy."

He smiled for all reply, took her in his arms like a child, and had placed her on the cushions before she had time to realize the mode of her transference. Then taking a stride deeper into the water, he scrambled on board. The same instant the men gave way. They pulled carefully through the narrow jaws of the little harbour, and away with quivering oar and falling tide, went the boat, gliding out into the measureless north, where the horizon was now dotted with the sails that had preceded it.

No sooner were they afloat than a kind of enchantment enwrapped and possessed the soul of Clementina. Everything seemed all at once changed utterly. The very ends of the harbour piers might have stood in the Divina Commedia instead of the Moray Frith. Oh that wonderful look everything wears when beheld from the other side! Wonderful surely will this world appear—strangely *more*, when, become children again by being gathered to our fathers—joyous day! we turn and gaze back upon it from the other side! I imagine that, to him who has overcome it, the world, in very virtue of his victory, will show itself the lovely and pure thing it was created—for he will see through the cloudy envelope of his battle to the living kernel below. The cliffs, the rocks, the sands, the dune, the town, the very clouds that hung over the hill above Lossie House, were in strange fashion transfigured. To think of people sitting behind those windows while the splendour and freedom of space with all its divine shows invited them—lay bare and empty to them! Out and still out they rowed and drifted, till the coast began to open up beyond the headlands on either side. There a light breeze was waiting them. Up then went three short masts, and three dark brown sails shone red in the sun, and Malcolm came aft, over the great heap of brown nets, crept with apology across the poop, and got down into a little well behind, there to sit and steer the boat; for now, obedient to the wind in its sails, it went frolicking over the sea.

The bonnie Annie bore a picked crew; for Peter's boat was to him a sort of church, in which he would not with his will carry any Jonah fleeing from the will of the lord of the sea. And that boat's crew did not look the less merrily out of their blue eyes, or carry themselves the less manfully in danger, that they believed a lord of the earth and the sea and the fountains of water cared for his children and would have them honest and fearless.

And now came a scattering of rubies and topazes over the slow waves, as the sun reached the edge of the horizon, and shone with a glory of blinding red along the heaving level of green, dashed with the foam of their flight. Could such a descent as this be intended for a type of death? Clementina asked. Was it not rather as if, from a corner of the tomb behind, she saw the back parts of a resurrection and ascension: warmth, out-shining, splendour; departure from the door of the tomb; exultant memory; tarnishing gold, red fading to russet; fainting of spirit, loneliness; deepening blue and green; pallor, grayness, coldness; out-creeping stars; further-reaching memory; the dawn of infinite hope and foresight; the assurance that under passion itself lay a better and holier mystery? Here was God's naughty child, the world, laid asleep and dreaming—if not merrily, yet contentedly; and there was the sky with all the day gathered and hidden up in its blue, ready to break forth again in laughter on the morrow, bending over its skyey cradle like a mother! and there was the aurora, the secret of life, creeping away round to the north to be ready! Then first, when the slow twilight had fairly settled into night, did Clementina begin to know the deepest marvel of this facet of the rose-diamond life! God's night and sky and sea were her's now, as they had been Malcolm's from childhood! And when the nets had been paid out, and sank straight into the deep, stretched betwixt leads below and floats and buoys above, extending a screen of meshes against the rush of the watery herd; when the sails were down, and the whole vault of stars laid bare to her eyes as she lay; when the boat was still, fast to the nets, anchored as it were by hanging acres of curtain, and all was silent as a church, waiting, and she might dream or sleep or pray as she would, with nothing about her but peace and love and the deep sea, and over her but still peace and love and the deeper sky, then the soul of Clementina rose and worshipped the soul of the universe; her spirit clave to the Life of her life, the Thought of her thought, the Heart of her heart; her will bowed itself to the creator of will, worshipping the supreme, original, only Freedom—the Father of her love, the Father of Jesus Christ, the God of the hearts of the universe, the Thinker of all thoughts, the Beginner of all beginnings, the All-in-all. It was her first experience of speechless adoration.

Most of the men were asleep in the bows of the boat; all were lying down but one. That one was Malcolm. He had come aft, and seated himself under the platform leaning against it.

The boat rose and sank a little, just enough to rock the sleeping children a little deeper into their sleep; Malcolm thought all slept. He did not see how Clementina's eyes shone back to the heavens—no star in them to be named beside those eyes. She knew that Malcolm was near her, but she would not speak; she would not break the peace of the presence. A minute or two passed. Then softly woke a murmur of sound, that strengthened and grew, and swelled at last into a song. She feared to stir lest she should interrupt its flow. And thus it flowed:

The stars are steady abune;
  I' the water they flichter an' flee;
But steady aye luikin' doon,
  They ken themsel's i' the sea.

A' licht, an' clear, an' free,
  God, thou shinest abune;
Yet luik, an' see thysel' in me,
  God, whan thou luikest doon.

A silence followed, but a silence that seemed about to be broken. And again Malcolm sang:

There was an auld fisher—he sat by the wa',
  An' luikit oot ower the sea;
The bairnies war playin', he smilit on them a',
  But the tear stude in his e'e.

*An' it's oh to win awa', awa'!*
*An' it's oh to win awa'*
*Whaur the bairns come hame, an' the wives they bide,*
*An' God is the Father o' a'!*

Jocky an' Jeamy an' Tammy oot there,
A' i' the boatie gaed doon;
An' I'm ower auld to fish ony mair,
An' I hinna the chance to droon.
*An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! &c.*

An' Jeanie she grat to ease her hert,
An' she easit hersel' awa';
But I'm ower auld for the tears to stert,
An' sae the sighs maun blaw.
*An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! &c.*

Lord, steer me hame whaur my Lord has steerit,
For I'm tired o' life's rockin' sea;
An' dinna be lang, for I'm nearhan' fearit
'At I'm 'maist ower auld to dee.
*An' it's oh to win awa', awa'! &c.*

Again the stars and the sky were all, and there was no sound but the slight murmurous lipping of the low swell against the edges of the planks. Then Clementina said:

"Did you make that song, Malcolm?"

"Whilk o' them, my leddy?—But it's a' ane—they're baith ine, sic as they are."

"Thank you," she returned.

"What for, my leddy?'

"For speaking Scotch to me."

"I beg your pardon, my lady. I forgot you ladyship was English."

"Please forget it," she said. "But I thank you for your songs too. It was the second I wanted to know about; the first I was certain was your own. I did not know you could enter like that into the feelings of an old man."

"Why not, my lady? I never can see living thing without asking it how it feels. Often and often, out here at such a time as this, have I tried to fancy myself a herring caught by the gills in the net down below, instead of the fisherman in the boat above going to haul him out."

"And did you succeed?"

"Well, I fancy I came to understand as much of him as he does himself. It's a merry enough life down there. The flukes—plaice, you call them, my lady,—bother me, I confess. I never contemplate one without feeling as if I had been sat upon when I was a baby. But for an old man!—Why, that's what I shall be myself one day most likely, and it would be a shame not to know pretty nearly how *he* felt—near enough at least to make a song about him."

"And shan't you mind being an old man, then, Malcolm?"

"Not in the least, my lady. I shall mind nothing so long as I can trust in the maker of me. If my faith should give way—why then there would be nothing worth minding either! I don't know but I should kill myself."

"Malcolm!"

"Which is worse, my lady—to distrust God, or to think life worth having without him?"

"But one may hope in the midst of doubt—at least that is what Mr Graham—and you—have taught me to do."

"Yes, surely, my lady. I won't let anyone beat me at that, if I can help it. And I think that so long as I kept my reason, I should be able to cry out, as that grandest and most human of all the prophets did—'Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.' But would you not like to sleep, my lady?"

"No, Malcolm. I would much rather hear you talk.—Could you not tell me a story now? Lady Lossie mentioned one you once told her about an old castle somewhere not far from here——"

"Eh, my leddy!" broke in Annie Mair, who had waked up while they were speaking, "I wuss ye wad gar him tell ye that story, for my man he's h'ard 'im tell't, an' he says it's unco gruesome: I wad fain hear 't.—Wauk up, Lizzy," she went on, in her eagerness waiting for no answer; "Ma'colm's gauin' to tell 's the tale o' the auld castel o' Colonsay.—It's oot by yon'er, my leddy—no that far frae the Deid Heid.—Wauk up, Lizzy."

"I'm no sleepin', Annie," said Lizzy, "—though like Ma'colm's auld man," she added with a sigh, "I wad whiles fain be."

Now there were reasons why Malcolm should not be unwilling to tell the strange wild story requested of him, and he commenced it at once, but modified the Scotch of it considerably for the sake of the unaccustomed ears. When it was ended Clementina said nothing; Annie Mair said "Hech, sirs!" and Lizzy with a great sigh, remarked,

"The deil maun be in a'thing whaur God hasna a han', I'm thinkin'."

"Ye may tak yer aith upo' that," rejoined Malcolm.

It was a custom in Peter's boat never to draw the nets without a prayer, uttered now by one and now by another of the crew. Upon this occasion, whether it was in deference to Malcolm, who, as he well understood, did not like long prayers, or that the presence of Clementina exercised some restraint upon his spirit, out of the bows of the boat came now the solemn voice of its master, bearing only this one sentence:

"Oh Thoo, wha didst tell thy dissiples to cast the net upo' the side whaur swam the fish, gien it be thy wull 'at we catch the nicht, lat 's catch; gien it binna thy wull, lat 's no catch.—Haul awa', my laads."

Up sprang the men, and went each to his place, and straight a torrent of gleaming fish was pouring in over the gunwale of the boat. Such a take it was ere the last of the nets was drawn, as the oldest of them had seldom seen. Thousands of fish there were that had never got into the meshes at all.

"I cannot understand it," said Clementina. "There are multitudes more fish than there are meshes in the nets to catch them: if they are not caught, why do they not swim away?"

"Because they are drowned, my lady," answered Malcolm.

"What do you mean by that? How can you drown a fish?"

"You may call it *suffocated* if you like, my lady; it is all the same. You have read of panic-stricken people, when a church or a theatre is on fire, rushing to the door all in a heap, and crowding each other to death? It is something like that with the fish. They are swimming along in a great shoal, yards thick; and when the first can get no farther, that does not at once stop the rest, any more than it would in a crowd of people; those that are behind come pressing up into every corner, where there is room, till they are one dense mass. Then they push and push to get forward, and can't get through, and the rest come still crowding on behind and above and below, till a multitude of them are jammed so tight against each other that they can't open their gills; and even if they could, there would not be air enough for them. You've seen the goldfish in the swan-basin, my lady, how they open and shut their gills constantly: that's their way of getting air out of the water by some wonderful contrivance nobody understands, for they need breath just as much as we do: and to close their gills is to them the same as closing a man's mouth and nose. That's how the most of those herrings are taken."

All were now ready to seek the harbour. A light westerly wind was still blowing, with the aid of which, heavy-laden, they crept slowly to the land. As she lay snug and warm, with the cool breath of the sea on her face, a half sleep came over Clementina, and she half dreamed that she was voyaging in a ship of the air, through infinite regions of space, with a destination too glorious to be known. The herring-boat was a living splendour of strength and speed, its sails were as the wings of a will, in place of the instruments of a force, and softly as mightily it bore them through the charmed realms of dreamland towards the ideal of the soul. And yet the herring-boat but crawled over the still waters with its load of fish, as the harvest waggon creeps over the field with its piled up sheaves; and she who imagined its wondrous speed was the only one who did not desire it should move faster. No word passed between her and Malcolm all their homeward way. Each was brooding over the night and its joy that enclosed them together, and hoping for that which was yet to be shaken from the lap of the coming time.

Also Clementina had in her mind a scheme for attempting what Malcolm had requested of her; the next day must see it carried into effect; and ever and anon, like a cold blast of doubt invading the bliss of confidence, into the heart of that sea-borne peace darted the thought, that, if she failed, she must leave at once for England, for she would not again meet Liftore.

## CHAPTER LXVII.

### SHORE.

At last they glided once more through the stony jaws of the harbour, as if returning again to the earth from a sojourn in the land of the disembodied. When Clementina's foot touched the shore she felt like one waked out of a dream, from whom yet the dream has not departed—but keeps floating about him, waved in thinner and yet thinner streams from the wings of the vanishing sleep. It seemed almost as if her spirit, instead of having come back to the world of its former abode, had been borne across the parting waters and landed on the shore of the immortals. There was the ghost-like harbour of the spirit land, the water gleaming betwixt its dark walls, one solitary boat motionless upon it, the men moving about like shadows in the star twilight! Here stood three women and a man on the shore, and save the stars no light shone, and from the land came no sound of life. Was it the dead of the night, or a day that had no sun? It was not dark, but the light was rayless. Or, rather, it was as if she had gained the power of seeing in the dark. Suppressed sleep wove the stuff of a dream around her, and the stir at her heart kept it alive with dream-forms. Even the voice of Peter's Annie, saying, "I s' bide for my man. Gude nicht, my leddy," did not break the charm. Her heart shaped that also into the dream. Turning away with Malcolm and Lizzy, she passed along the front of the Seaton. How still, how dead, how empty like cenotaphs, all the cottages looked! How the sea which lay like a watcher at their doors, murmured in its sleep! Arrived at the entrance to her own close, Lizzy next bade them good night, and Clementina and Malcolm were left.

And now drew near the full power, the culmination of the mounting enchantment of the night for Malcolm. When once the Scaurnose people should have passed them, they would be alone—alone as in the spaces between the stars. There would not be a living soul on the shore for hours. From the harbour the nearest way to the House was by the sea-gate, but where was the haste—with the lovely night around them, private as a dream shared only by two? Besides, to get in by that, they would have had to rouse the cantankerous Bykes, and what a jar would not that bring into the music of the silence! Instead, therefore, of turning up by the side of the stream where it crossed the shore, he took Clementina once again in his arms unforbidden, and carried her over. Then the long sands lay open to their feet. Presently they heard the Scaurnose party behind them, coming audibly, merrily on. As by a common resolve they turned to the left, and crossing the end of the Boar's Tail, resumed their former direction, with the dune now between them and the sea. The voices passed on the other side, and they heard them slowly merge into the inaudible. At length, after an interval of silence, on the westerly air came one quiver of laughter—by which Malcolm knew his friends were winding up the red path to the top of the cliff. And now the shore was bare of presence, bare of sound save the soft fitful rush of the rising tide. But behind the long sandhill, for all they could see of the sea, they might have been in the heart of a continent.

"Who would imagine the ocean so near us, my lady!" said Malcolm, after they had walked for some time without word spoken.

"Who can tell what may be near us?" she returned.

"True, my lady. Our future is near us, holding thousands of things unknown. Hosts of thinking beings with endless myriads of thoughts may be around us. What a joy to know that, of all things and all thoughts, God is nearest to us—*so* near that we cannot see him, but, far beyond seeing him, can know of him infinitely!"

As he spoke they came opposite the tunnel, but he turned from it and they ascended the dune. As their heads rose over the top, and the sky-night above and the sea-night beneath rolled themselves out and rushed silently together, Malcolm said, as if thinking aloud:

"Thus shall we meet death and the unknown, and the new that breaks from the bosom of the invisible will be better than the old upon which the gates close behind us. The Son of man is content with my future, and I am content."

There was a peace in the words that troubled Clementina: he wanted no more than he had—this cold, imperturbable, devout fisherman! She did not see that it was the confidence of having all things that held his peace rooted. From the platform of the swivel, they looked abroad over the sea. Far north in the east lurked a suspicion of dawn, which seemed, while they gazed upon it, to "languish into life," and the sea was a shade less dark than when they turned from it to go behind the dune. They descended a few paces, and halted again.

"Did your ladyship ever see the sun rise?" asked Malcolm.

"Never in open country," she answered.

"Then stay and see it now, my lady. He'll rise just over yonder, a little nearer this way than that light from under his eyelids. A more glorious chance you could not have. And when he rises, just observe, one minute after he is up, how like a dream all you have been in to-night will look. It is to me strange even to awfulness how many different phases of things, and feelings about them, and moods of life and consciousness, God can tie up in the bundle of one world with one human soul to carry it."

Clementina slowly sank on the sand of the slope, and like lovely sphinx of northern desert, gazed in immovable silence out on the yet more northern sea. Malcolm took his place a little below, leaning on his elbow, for the slope was steep, and looking up at her. Thus they waited the sunrise.

Was it minutes or only moments passed in that silence—whose speech was the soft ripple of the sea on the sand? Neither could have answered the question. At length said Malcolm,

"I think of changing my service, my lady."

"Indeed, Malcolm!"

"Yes, my lady. My—mistress does not like to turn me away, but she is tired of me, and does not want me any longer."

"But you would never think of finally forsaking a fisherman's life for that of a servant, surely, Malcolm?"

"What would become of Kelpie, my lady?" rejoined Malcolm, smiling to himself.

"Ah!" said Clementina, bewildered; "I had not thought of her.—But you cannot take her with you," she added, coming a little to her senses.

"There is nobody about the place who could, or rather, who would do anything with her. They would sell her. I have enough to buy her, and perhaps somebody might not object to the encumbrance, but hire me and her together.—*Your* groom wants a coachman's place, my lady."

"O Malcolm! do you mean you would be *my* groom?" cried Clementina, pressing her palms together.

"If you would have me, my lady; but I have heard you say you would have none but a married man?"

"But—Malcolm—don't you know anybody that would—?—Could you not find some one—some lady—that—?—I mean, why shouldn't you be a married man?"

"For a very good and to me rather sad reason, my lady; the only woman I could marry, or should ever be able to marry,—would not have me. She is very kind and very noble, but—it is preposterous—the thing is too preposterous. I dare not have the presumption to ask her."

Malcolm's voice trembled as he spoke, and a few moments' pause followed, during which he could not lift his eyes. The whole heaven seemed pressing down their lids. The breath which he modelled into words seemed to come in little billows.

But his words had raised a storm in Clementina's bosom. A cry broke from her, as if driven forth by pain. She called up all the energy of her nature, and stilled herself to speak. The voice that came was little more than a sob-scattered whisper, but to her it seemed as if all the world must hear.

"Oh Malcolm!" she panted, "I *will* try to be good and wise. Don't marry anybody else—*anybody*, I mean; but come with Kelpie and be my groom, and wait and see if I don't grow better."

Malcolm leaped to his feet and threw himself at hers. He had heard but in part, and he *must* know all.

"My lady," he said, with intense quiet, "Kelpie and I will be your slaves. Take me for fisherman—groom—what you will. I offer the whole sum of service that is in me." He kissed her feet. "My lady, I would put your feet on my head," he went on, "only then what should I do when I see my Lord, and cast myself before *him?*"

But Clementina, again her own to give, rose quickly, and said with all the dignity born of her inward grandeur,

"Rise, Malcolm; you misunderstand me."

Malcolm rose abashed, but stood erect before her, save that his head was bowed, for his heart was sunk in dismay. Then slowly, gently, Clementina knelt before him. He was bewildered, and thought she was going to pray. In sweet, clear, unshaken tones, for she feared nothing now, she said,

"Malcolm, I am not worthy of you. But take me—take my very soul if you will, for it is yours."

Now Malcolm saw that he had no right to raise a kneeling lady; all he could do was to kneel beside her. When people kneel, they lift up their hearts; and the creating heart of their joy was forgotten of neither. And well for them, for the love where God is not, be the lady lovely as Cordelia, the man gentle as Philip Sidney, will fare as the overkept manna.

When the huge tidal wave from the ocean of infinite delight had broken at last upon the shore of the finite, and withdrawn again into the deeps, leaving every cistern brimming, every fountain overflowing, the two entranced souls opened their bodily eyes, looked at each other, rose, and stood hand in hand, speechless.

"Ah, my lady!" said Malcolm at length, "what is to become of this delicate smoothness in my great rough hand? Will it not be hurt?"

"You don't know how strong it is, Malcolm. There!"

"I can scarcely feel it with my hand, my lady; it all goes through to my heart. It shall lie in mine as the diamond in the rock."

"No, no, Malcolm! Now that I am going to be a fisherman's wife, it must be a strong hand—it must work. What homage shall you require of me, Malcolm? What will you have me do to rise a little nearer your level? Shall I give away lands and money? And shall I live with you in the Seaton? or will you come and fish at Wastbeach?"

"Forgive me, my lady; I can't think about things now—even with you in them. There is neither past nor future to me now—only this one eternal morning. Sit here, and look up, Lady Clementina:—see all those worlds:—something in me constantly says that I shall know every one of them one day; that they are all but rooms in the house of my spirit, that is, the house of our Father. Let us not now, when your love makes me twice eternal, talk of time and places. Come, let us fancy ourselves two blessed spirits, lying full in the sight and light of our God,—as indeed what else are we?—warming our hearts in his presence and peace; and that we have but to rise and spread our wings to soar aloft and find—what shall it be, my lady? Worlds upon worlds? No, no. What are worlds upon worlds in infinite show until we have seen the face of the Son of Man?"

A silence fell. But he resumed.

"Let us imagine our earthly life behind us, our hearts clean, love all in all.—But that sends me back to the now. My lady, I know I shall never love you aright until you have helped me perfect. When the face of the least lovely of my neighbours needs but appear to rouse in my heart a divine tenderness, then it must be that I shall love you better than now. Now, alas! I am so pervious to wrong! so fertile of resentments and indignations! You must cure me, my divine Clemency.—Am I a poor lover to talk, this first glorious hour, of anything but my lady love? Ah! but let it excuse me that this love is no new thing to me. It is a very old love. I have loved you a thousand years. I love every atom of your being, every thought that can harbour in your soul, and I am jealous of hurting your blossoms with the over-jubilant winds of that very love. I would therefore behold you folded in the atmosphere of the Love eternal. My lady, if I were to talk of your beauty, I should but offend you, for you would think I raved, and spoke not the words of truth and soberness. But how often have I not cried to the God who breathed the beauty into you that it might shine out of you, to save my soul from the tempest of its own delight therein. And now I am like one that has caught an angel in his net, and fears to come too nigh, lest fire should flash from the eyes of the startled splendour, and consume the net and him who holds it. But I will not rave, because I would possess in grand peace that which I lay at your feet. I am yours, and would be worthy of your moonlight calm."

"Alas! I am beside you but a block of marble!" said Clementina. "You are so eloquent, my——"

"New groom," suggested Malcolm gently.

Clementina smiled.

"But my heart is so full," she went on, "that I cannot think the filmiest thought. I hardly know that I feel. I only know that I want to weep."

"Weep then, my word ineffable!" cried Malcolm, and laid himself again at her feet, kissed them, and was silent.

He was but a fisher poet; no courtier, no darling of society, no dealer in the fine speeches, no clerk of compliments. All the words he had were the living blossoms of thought rooted in feeling. His pure clear heart was as a crystal cup, through which shone the red wine of his love. To himself, Malcolm stammered as a dumb man, the string of whose tongue has but just been loosed; to Clementina his speech was as the song of the Lady to Comus, "divine enchanting ravishment." The

God of truth is surely present at every such marriage feast of two radiant spirits. Their joy was that neither had fooled the hope of the other.

And so the herring boat had indeed carried Clementina over into paradise, and this night of the world was to her a twilight of heaven. God alone can tell what delights it is possible for him to give to the pure in heart who shall one day behold him. Like two that had died and found each other, they talked until speech rose into silence, they smiled until the dews which the smiles had sublimed claimed their turn and descended in tears.

All at once they became aware that an eye was upon them. It was the sun. He was ten degrees up the slope of the sky, and they had never seen him rise.

With the sun came a troublous thought, for with the sun came "a world of men." Neither they nor the simple fisher folk, their friends, had thought of the thing, but now at length it occurred to Clementina that she would rather not walk up to the door of Lossie House with Malcolm at this hour of the morning. Yet neither could she well appear alone. Ere she had spoken Malcolm rose.

"You won't mind being left, my lady," he said, "for a quarter of an hour or so—will you? I want to bring Lizzy to walk home with you."

He went, and Clementina sat alone on the dune in a reposeful rapture, to which the sleeplessness of the night gave a certain additional intensity and richness and strangeness. She watched the great strides of her fisherman as he walked along the sands, and she seemed not to be left behind, but to go with him every step. The tide was again falling, and the sea shone and sparkled and danced with life, and the wet sand gleamed, and a soft air blew on her cheek, and the lordly sun was mounting higher and higher, and a lark over her head was sacrificing all nature in his song; and it seemed as if Malcolm were still speaking strange, half intelligible, altogether lovely things in her ears. She felt a little weary, and laid her head down upon her arm to listen more at her ease.

Now the lark had seen all and heard all, and was telling it again to the universe, only in dark sayings which none but themselves could understand; therefore it is no wonder that, as she listened, his song melted into a dream, and she slept. And the dream was lovely as dream needs be, but not lovelier than the wakeful night. She opened her eyes, calm as any cradled child, and there stood her fisherman!

"I have been explaining to Lizzy, my lady," he said, "that your ladyship would rather have her company up to the door than mine. Lizzy is to be trusted, my lady."

"'Deed, my leddy," said Lizzy, "Ma'colm's been ower guid to me, no to gar me do onything he wad ha'e o' me. I can haud my tongue whan I like, my leddy. An' dinna doobt my thouchts, my leddy, for I ken Ma'colm as weel's ye du yersel', my leddy."

While she was speaking, Clementina rose, and they went straight to the door in the bank. Through the tunnel and the young wood and the dew and the morning odours, along the lovely paths the three walked to the house together. And oh, how the larks of the earth and the larks of the soul sang for two of them! And how the burn rang with music, and the air throbbed with sweetest life! while the breath of God made a little sound as of a going now and then in the tops of the fir-trees, and the sun shone his brightest and best, and all nature knew that the heart of God is the home of his creatures.

When they drew near the house Malcolm left them. After they had rung a good many times, the door was opened by the housekeeper, looking very proper and just a little scandalized.

"Please, Mrs Courthope," said Lady Clementina, "will you give orders that when this young woman comes to see me to-day she shall be shown up to my room?"

Then she turned to Lizzy and thanked her for her kindness, and they parted—Lizzy to her baby, and Clementina to yet a dream or two. Long before her dreams were sleeping ones, however, Malcolm was out in the bay in the Psyche's dinghy, catching mackerel: some should be for his grandfather, some for Miss Horn, some for Mrs Courthope, and some for Mrs Crathie.

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### THE CREW OF THE BONNIE ANNIE.

Having caught as many fish as he wanted, Malcolm rowed to the other side of the Scaurnose. There he landed and left the dinghy in the shelter of the rocks, the fish covered with long broad-leaved *tangles*, climbed the steep cliff, and sought Blue Peter. The brown village was quiet as a churchyard, although the sun was now growing hot. Of the men some were not yet returned from the night's fishing, and some were asleep in their beds after it. Not a chimney smoked. But Malcolm seemed to have in his own single being life and joy enough for a world; such an intense consciousness of bliss burned within him, that, in the sightless, motionless village, he seemed to himself to stand like an altar blazing in the midst of desert Carnac. But he was not the only one awake: on the threshold of Peter's cottage sat his little Phemy, trying to polish a bit of serpentine marble upon the doorstep, with the help of water, which stood by her side in a broken tea-cup.

She lifted her sweet gray eyes, and smiled him a welcome.

"Are ye up a'ready, Phemy?" he said.

"I ha'ena been doon yet," she answered. "My mither was oot last nicht wi' the boat, an' Auntie Jinse was wi' the bairn, an' sae I cud du as I likit."

"An' what did ye like, Phemy?"

"A'body kens what I like," answered the child: "I was oot an' aboot a' nicht. An' eh, Ma'colm! I hed a veesion."

"What was that, Phemy?"

"I was upo' the tap o' the Nose, jist as the sun rase, luikin' aboot me, an' awa' upo' the Boar's Tail I saw twa angels sayin' their prayers. Nae doobt they war prayin' for the haill warl', i' the quaiet o' the mornin' afore the din begud. Maybe ane o' them was that auld priest wi' the lang name i' the buik o' Genesis, 'at hed naither father nor mither—puir man!—him 'at gaed aboot blissin' fowk."

Malcolm thought he might take his own time to set the child right, and asked her to go and tell her father that he wanted to see him. In a few minutes Blue Peter appeared, rubbing his eyes—one of the dead called too early from the tomb of sleep.

"Freen' Peter," said Malcolm, "I'm gaein' to speak oot the day."

Peter woke up. "Weel," he said, "I *am* glaid o' that, Ma'colm,—I beg yer pardon, my lord, I sud say.—Annie!"

"Haud a quaiet sough, man. I wadna hae 't come oot at Scaurnose first. I'm come noo 'cause I want ye to stan' by me."

"I wull that, my lord."

"Weel, gang an' gether yer boat's crew, an' fess them doon to the cove, an' I'll tell them, an' maybe they'll stan' by me as weel."

"There's little fear o' that, gien I ken my men," answered Peter, and went off, rather less than half-clothed, the sun burning hot upon his back, through the sleeping village, to call them, while Malcolm went and waited beside the dinghy.

At length six men in a body, and one lagging behind, appeared coming down the winding path—all but Peter no doubt wondering why they were called so soon from their beds, on such a peaceful morning, after being out the night before. Malcolm went to meet them.

"Freen's," he said, "I'm in want o' yer help."

"Onything ye like, Ma'colm, sae far 's I'm concernt, 'cep' it be to ride yer mere. That I wull no tak in han'," said Jeames Gentle.

"It's no that," returned Malcolm. "It's naething freely sae hard's that, I'm thinkin'. The hard 'll be to believe what I'm gaein' to tell ye."

"Ye'll no be gaein' to set up for a proaphet?" said Girnel, with something approaching a sneer.

Girnel was the one who came down behind the rest.

"Na, na; naething like it," said Blue Peter.

"But first ye'll promise to haud yer tongues for half a day?" said Malcolm.

"Ay, ay; we'll no clype."—"We s' haud wer tongues," cried one and another and another, and all seemed to assent.

"Weel," said Malcolm, "My name 's no Ma'colm MacPhail, but——"

"We a' ken that," said Girnel.

"An' what mair du ye ken?" asked Blue Peter, with some anger at his interruption.

"Ow, naething."

"Weel, ye ken little," said Peter, and the rest laughed.

"I'm the Markis o' Lossie," said Malcolm.

Every man but Peter laughed again: all took it for a joke precursive of some serious announcement. That which it would have least surprised them to hear, would have been that he was a natural son of the late marquis.

"My name 's Ma'colm Colonsay," resumed Malcolm, quietly; "an' I'm the saxt Markis o' Lossie."

A dead silence followed, and in doubt, astonishment, bewilderment, and vague awe, accompanied in the case of two or three by a strong inclination to laugh, with which they struggled, belief began. Always a curious observer of humanity, Malcolm calmly watched them. From discord of expression, most of their faces had grown idiotic. But after a few moments of stupefaction, first one and then another turned his eyes upon Blue Peter, and perceiving that the matter was to him not only serious but evidently no news, each began to come to his senses, the chaos within him slowly arranged itself, and his face gradually settled into an expression of sanity—the foolishness disappearing while the wonder and pleasure remained.

"Ye mauna tak it ill, my lord," said Peter, "gien the laads be ta'en aback wi' the news. It's a some suddent shift o' the win', ye see, my lord."

"I wuss yer lordship weel," thereupon said one, and held out his hand.

"Lang life to yer lordship," said another.

Each spoke a hearty word, and shook hands with him—all except Girnel, who held back, looking on, with his right hand in his trouser-pocket.

He was one who always took the opposite side—a tolerably honest and trustworthy soul, with a good many knots and pieces of cross grain in the timber of him. His old Adam was the most essential and thorough of dissenters, always arguing and disputing, especially on theological questions.

"Na," said Girnel; "ye maun saitisfee me first wha ye are, an' what ye want o' me. I'm no to be drawn into onything 'at I dinna ken a' aboot aforehan'. I s' no tie mysel' up wi' ony promises. Them 'at gangs whaur they kenna, may lan' at the widdie (*gallows*)."

"Nae doobt," said Malcolm, "yer ain jeedgement 's mair to ye nor my word, Girnel; but saw ye ever onything in me 'at wad justifee ye in no lippenin' to that sae far 's it gaed?"

"Ow na! I'm no sayin' that naither. But what ha'e ye to shaw anent the privin' o' 't?"

"I have papers signed by my father, the late marquis, and sealed and witnessed by well-known gentlemen of the neighbourhood."

"Whaur are they?" said Girnel, holding out his hand.

"I don't carry such valuable things about me," answered Malcolm. "But if you go with the rest, you shall see them afterwards."

"I'll du naething i' the dark," persisted Girnel. "Whan I see the peppers, I'll ken what to du."

With a nod of the head as self-important as decisive, he turned his back.

"At all events," said Malcolm, "you will say nothing about it before you hear from one of us again?"

"I mak nae promises," answered Girnel, from behind his own back.

A howl arose from the rest.

"Ye promised a'ready," said Blue Peter.

"Na, I didna that. I said never a word."

"What right then had you to remain and listen to my disclosure?" said Malcolm. "If you be guilty of such a mean trick as betray me and ruin my plans, no honest man in Portlossie or Scaurnose but will scorn you."

"There! tak ye that!" said Peter. "An' I s' promise ye, ye s' never lay leg ower the gunnel o' *my* boat again. I s' hae nane but Christi-an men i' *my* pey."

"Ye hired me for the sizon, Blew Peter," said Girnel, turning defiantly.

"Oh! ye s' ha'e yer wauges. I'm no ane to creep oot o' a bargain, or say 'at I didna promise. Ye s' get yer reward, never fear. But into my boat ye s' no come. We'll ha'e nae Auchans i' oor camp. Eh, Girnel, man, but ye ha'e lost yersel' the day! He'll never loup far 'at winna lippen. The auld worthies tuik their life i' their han', but ye tak yer fit (*foot*) i' yours. I'm clean affrontit 'at ever I hed ye amo' my men."

But with that there rushed over Peter the recollection of how he had himself mistrusted, not Malcolm's word indeed, but his heart. He turned, and clasping his hands in sudden self-reproach,

"My lord, I saired ye ill mysel' ance," he cried; "for I misdoobted 'at ye wasna the same to me efter ye cam to yer ain. I beg yer pardon, my lord, here i' the face o' my freen's. It was ill-temper an' pride i' me, jist the same asi t's noo in Girnel there; an' ye maun forgi'e him, as ye forga'e me, my lord, as sune 's ye can."

"I'll du that, my Peter, the verra moment he wants to be forgi'en," said Malcolm.

But Girnel turned with a grunt, and moved away towards the cliff.

"This 'll never du," said Peter. "A man 'at 's honest i' the main may play the verra dog afore he gets the deevil oot o' 'im ance he 's in like that. Gang efter 'im, laads, an' kep (*intercept*) 'im an' keep 'im. We'll ha'e to cast a k-not or twa aboot 'im, an' lay 'im i' the boddom o' the boat."

The six had already started after him like one man. But Malcolm cried,

"Let him go: he has done me no wrong yet, and I don't believe will do me any. But for no risk must we prevent wrong with wrong."

So Girnel was allowed to depart—scarcely in peace, for he was already ashamed of himself. With the understanding that they were to be ready to his call, and that they should hear from him in the course of the day, Malcolm left them, and rowed back to the Psyche. There he took his basket of fish on his arm, which he went and distributed according to his purpose, ending with

Mrs Courthope at the House. Then he fed and dressed Kelpie, saddled her and galloped to Duff Harbour, where he found Mr Soutar at breakfast, and arranged with him to be at Lossie House at two o'clock. On his way back he called on Mr Morrison, and requested his presence at the same hour. Skirting the back of the House, and riding as straight as he could, he then made for Scaurnose, and appointed his friends to be near the House at noon, so placed as not to attract observation and yet be within hearing of his whistle from door or window in the front. Returning to the House, he put up Kelpie, rubbed her down and fed her; then, as there was yet some time to spare, paid a visit to the factor. He found his lady, for all his present of fish in the earlier morning, anything but friendly. She did all she could to humble him; insisted on paying him for the fish; and ordered him, because they smelt of the stable, to take off his boots before he went upstairs—to his master's room, as she phrased it. But Mr Crathie was cordial, and, to Malcolm's great satisfaction, much recovered. He had better than pleasant talk with him.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

### LIZZY'S BABY.

While they were out in the fishing-boat together, Clementina had, with less difficulty than she had anticipated, persuaded Lizzy to tell Lady Lossie her secret. It was in the hope of an interview with her false lover that the poor girl had consented so easily. A great longing had risen within her to have the father of her child acknowledge him—only to her, taking him once in his arms. That was all. She had no hope, thought indeed she had no desire for herself. But a kind word to him would be welcome as light. The love that covers sins had covered the multitude of his, and although hopelessness had put desire to sleep, she would gladly have given her life for a loving smile from him. But mingled with this longing to see him once with his child in his arms, a certain loyalty to the house of Lossie also influenced her to listen to the solicitation of Lady Clementina, and tell the marchioness the truth. She cherished no resentment against Liftore, but not therefore was she willing to allow a poor young thing like Lady Lossie, whom they all liked, to be sacrificed to such a man, who would doubtless at length behave badly enough to her also.

With trembling hands, and heart now beating wildly, now failing for fear, she dressed her baby and herself as well as she could, and, about one o'clock, went to the House.

Now nothing would have better pleased Lady Clementina than that Liftore and Lizzy should meet in Florimel's presence, but she recoiled altogether from the small stratagems, not to mention the lies, necessary to the effecting of such a confrontation. So she had to content herself with bringing the two girls together, and, when Lizzy was a little rested, and had had a glass of wine, went to look for Florimel.

She found her in a little room adjoining the library, which, on her first coming to Lossie, she had chosen for her waking nest. Liftore had, if not quite the freedom of the spot, yet privileges there; but at that moment Florimel was alone in it. Clementina informed her that a fisher-girl, with a sad story which she wanted to tell her, had come to the house; and Florimel, who was not only kind-hearted, but relished the position she imagined herself to occupy as lady of the place, at once assented to her proposal to bring the young woman to her there.

Now Florimel and the earl had had a small quarrel the night before, after Clementina left the dinner-table, and for the pleasure of keeping it up Florimel had not appeared at breakfast, and had declined to ride with his lordship, who had therefore been all the morning on the watch for an opportunity of reconciling himself. It so happened that from the end of one of the long narrow passages in which the house abounded, he caught a glimpse of Clementina's dress vanishing through the library door, and took the lady for Florimel on her way to her boudoir.

When Clementina entered with Lizzy carrying her child, Florimel instantly suspected the truth, both as to who she was and as to the design of her appearance. Her face flushed, for her heart filled with anger, chiefly indeed against Malcolm, but against the two women as well, who, she did not doubt, had lent themselves to his designs, whatever they might be. She rose, drew herself up, and stood prepared to act for both Liftore and herself.

Scarcely however had the poor girl, trembling at the evident displeasure the sight of her caused in Florimel, opened her mouth to answer her haughty inquiry as to her business, when Lord Liftore, daring an entrance without warning, opened the door behind her, and, almost as he opened it, began his apology. At the sound of his voice Lizzy turned with a cry, and her small remaining modicum of self-possession vanished at sight of him round whose phantom in her bosom whirred the leaves of her

LIBRARY

withered life on the stinging blasts of her shame and sorrow. As much from inability to stand as in supplication for the coveted favour, she dropped on her knees before him, incapable of uttering a word, but holding up her child imploringly. Taken altogether by surprise, and not knowing what to say or do, the earl stood and stared for a moment, then, moved by a dull spirit of subterfuge, fell back on the pretence of knowing nothing about her.

"Well, young woman," he said, affecting cheerfulness, "what do you want with me? I didn't advertise for a baby. Pretty child, though!"

Lizzy turned white as death, and her whole body seemed to give a heave of agony. Clementina had just taken the child from her arms when she sunk motionless at his feet. Florimel went to the bell. But Clementina prevented her from ringing.

"I will take her away," she said. "Do not expose her to your servants. Lady Lossie, my Lord Liftore is the father of this child: and if you can marry him after the way you have seen him use its mother, you are not too good for him, and I will trouble myself no more about you."

"I know the author of this calumny!" cried Florimel, panting and flushed. "You have been listening to the inventions of an ungrateful dependent! You slander my guest."

"Is it a calumny, my lord? Do I slander you?" said Lady Clementina, turning sharply upon the earl.

His lordship made her a cool obeisance.

Clementina ran into the library, laid the child in a big chair, and returned for the mother. She was already coming a little to herself, and feeling about blindly for her baby, while Florimel and Liftore were looking out of the window, with their backs towards her. Clementina raised and led her from the room. But in the doorway she turned and said—

"Good-bye, Lady Lossie. I thank you for your hospitality, but I can of course be your guest no longer."

"Of course not. There is no occasion for prolonged leave-taking," returned Florimel, with the air of a woman of forty.

"Florimel, you will curse the day you marry that man!" cried Clementina, and closed the door.

She hurried Lizzy to the library, put the baby in her arms, and clasped them both in her own. A gush of tears lightened the oppressed heart of the mother.

"Lat me oot o' the hoose, for God's sake!" she cried; and Clementina, almost as anxious to leave it as she, helped her down to the hall. When she saw the open door, she rushed out of it as if escaping from the pit.

Now Malcolm, as he came from the factor's, had seen her go in with her baby in her arms, and suspected the hand of Clementina. Wondering and anxious, but not very hopeful as to what might come of it, he waited close by; and when now he saw Lizzy dart from the house in wild perturbation, he ran from the cover of the surrounding trees into the open drive to meet her.

"Ma'colm!" groaned the poor girl, holding out her baby, "he winna own till't. He winna alloo 'at he kens oucht aboot me or the bairn aither!"

Malcolm had taken the child from her, and was clasping him to his bosom.

"He's the warst rascal, Lizzy," he said, "'at ever God made an' the deevil blaudit."

"Na, na," cried Lizzy; "the likes o' him whiles kills the wuman, but he wadna du that. Na, he's nae the warst; there's a heap waur nor him."

"Did ye see my mistress?" asked Malcolm.

"Ow ay; but she luikit sae angry at me, I cudna speyk. Him an' her 's ower thrang for her to believe onything again' him. An' what ever the bairn 's to du wantin' a father!"

"Lizzy," said Malcolm, clasping the child again to his bosom. "I's' be a father to yer bairn—that is, as weel's ane 'at's no yer man can be."

And he kissed the child tenderly.

The same moment an undefined impulse—the drawing of eyes probably—made him lift his towards the house; half leaning from the open window of the boudoir above him, stood Florimel and Liftore; and just as he looked up, Liftore was turning to Florimel with a smile that seemed to say—"There! I told you so! He is the father himself."

Malcolm replaced the infant in his mother's arm, and strode towards the house. Imagining he went to avenge her wrongs, Lizzy ran after him.

"Ma'colm! Ma'colm!" she cried; "—for my sake!—He's the father o' my bairn!"

Malcolm turned.

"Lizzy," he said solemnly, "I winna lay han' upon 'im."

Lizzy pressed her child closer with a throb of relief.

"Come in yersel' an' see," he added.

"I daurna! I daurna!" she said. But she lingered about the door.

## CHAPTER LXX.

### THE DISCLOSURE.

When the earl saw Malcolm coming, although he was no coward, and had reason to trust his skill, yet knowing himself both in the wrong and vastly inferior in strength to his enemy, it may be pardoned him that for the next few seconds his heart doubled its beats. But of all things he must not show fear before Florimel!

"What can the fellow be after now?" he said. "I must go down to him."

"No, no; don't go near him—he may be violent," objected Florimel, and laid her hand on his arm with a beseeching look in her face. "He is a dangerous man."

Liftore laughed.

"Stop here till I return," he said, and left the room.

But Florimel followed, fearful of what might happen, and enraged with her brother.

Malcolm's brief detention by Lizzy gave Liftore a little advantage, for just as Malcolm approached the top of the great staircase, Liftore gained it. Hastening to secure the command of the position, and resolved to shun all parley, he stood ready to strike. Malcolm, however, caught sight of him and his attitude in time, and, fearful of breaking his word to Lizzy, pulled himself up abruptly a few steps from the top—just as Florimel appeared.

"MacPhail," she said, sweeping to the stair like an indignant goddess, "I discharge you from my service. Leave the house instantly."

Malcolm turned, flew down, and ran to the servants' stair half the length of the house away. As he crossed the servants' hall he saw Rose. She was the only one in the house except Clementina to whom he could look for help.

"Come after me, Rose," he said without stopping.

She followed instantly, as fast as she could run, and saw him enter the drawing-room. Florimel and Liftore were there. The earl had Florimel's hand in his.

"For God's sake, my lady!" cried Malcolm, "hear me one word before you promise that man anything."

His lordship started back from Florimel, and turned upon Malcolm in a fury. But he had not now the advantage of the stair, and hesitated. Florimel's eyes dilated with wrath.

"I tell you for the last time, my lady," said Malcolm, "if you marry that man, you will marry a liar and a scoundrel."

Liftore laughed, and his imitation of scorn was wonderfully successful, for he felt sure of Florimel, now that she had thus taken his part.

"Shall I ring for the servants, Lady Lossie, to put the fellow out?" he said. "The man is as mad as a March hare."

Meantime Lady Clementina, her maid having gone to send her man to get horses for her at once, was alone in her room, which was close to the drawing-room: hearing Malcolm's voice, she ran to the door, and saw Rose in a listening attitude at that of the drawing-room.

"What are you doing there?" she said.

"Mr MacPhail told me to follow him, my lady, and I am waiting here till he wants me."

Clementina went into the drawing-room, and was present during all that now follows. Lizzy also, hearing loud voices and still afraid of mischief, had come peering up the stair, and now approached the other door, behind Florimel and the earl.

"So!" cried Florimel, "this is the way you keep your promise to my father!"

"It is, my lady. To associate the name of Liftore with his would be to blot the scutcheon of Lossie. He is not fit to walk the street with men: his touch is to you an utter degradation. My lady, in the name of your father, I beg a word with you in private."

"You insult me."

"I beg of you, my lady—for your own dear sake."

"Once more I order you to leave my house, and never set foot in it again."

"You hear her ladyship?" cried Liftore. "Get out."

He approached threateningly.

"Stand back," said Malcolm. "If it were not that I promised the poor girl carrying your baby out there, I should soon——"

It was unwisely said: the earl came on the bolder. For all Malcolm could do to parry, evade, or stop his blows, he had soon taken several pretty severe ones. Then came the voice of Lizzy in an agony from the door—

"Haud aff o' yersel', Ma'colm. I canna bide it. I gi'e ye back yer word."

"We'll manage yet, Lizzy," answered Malcolm, and kept warily retreating towards a window. Suddenly he dashed his elbow through a pane, and gave a loud shrill whistle, the same instant receiving a blow over the eye which the blood followed. Lizzy made a rush forward, but the terror that the father would strike the child he had disowned, seized her, and she stood trembling. Already, however, Clementina and Rose had darted between, and, full of rage as he was, Liftore was compelled to restrain himself.

"Oh!" he said, "if ladies want a share in the row, I must yield my place," and drew back.

The few men servants now came hurrying all together into the room.

"Take that rascal there, and put him under the pump," said Liftore. "He is mad."

"My fellowservants know better than touch me," said Malcolm.

The men looked to their mistress.

"Do as my lord tells you," she said, "—and instantly."

"Men," said Malcolm, "I have spared that foolish lord there for the sake of this fisher-girl and his child, but don't one of *you* touch me."

Stoat was a brave enough man, and not a little jealous of Malcolm, but he dared not obey his mistress.

And now came the tramp of many feet along the landing from the stair-head, and the six fishermen entered, two and two. Florimel started forward.

"My brave fishermen!" she cried. "Take that bad man MacPhail, and put him out of my grounds."

"I canna du't, my leddy," answered their leader.

"Take Lord Liftore," said Malcolm, "and hold him, while I make him acquainted with a fact or two which he may judge of consequence to him."

The men walked straight up to the earl. He struck right and left, but was overpowered in a moment, and held fast.

"Stan' still," said Peter, "or I ha'e a han'-fu' o' twine i' my pooch 'at I'll jist cast a k-not aboot yer airms wi' in a jiffey."

His lordship stood still, muttering curses.

Then Malcolm stepped into the middle of the room approaching his sister.

"I tell you to leave the house," Florimel shrieked, beside herself with fury, yet pale as marble with a growing terror for which she could ill have accounted.

"Florimel!" said Malcolm solemnly, calling his sister by name for the first time.

"You insolent wretch!" she cried, panting. "What right have you, if you *be*, as you say, my base-born brother, to call me by my name."

"Florimel!" repeated Malcolm, and the voice was like the voice of her father, "I have done what I could to serve you."

"And I want no more such service!" she returned, beginning to tremble.

"But you have driven me almost to extremities," he went on, heedless of her interruption. "Beware of doing so quite."

"Will nobody take pity on me?" said Florimel, and looked round imploringly. Then, finding herself ready to burst into tears, she gathered all her pride, and stepping up to Malcolm, looked him in the face, and said,

"Pray, sir! is this house yours or mine?"

"Mine," answered Malcolm. "I am the Marquis of Lossie, and while I am your elder brother and the head of the family, you shall never with my consent marry that base man—a man it would blast me to the soul to call brother."

Liftore uttered a fierce imprecation.

"If you dare give breath to another such word in my sister's presence, I will have you gagged," said Malcolm. "If my sister marries him," he continued, turning again to Florimel, "not one shilling shall she take with her beyond what she may happen to have in her purse at the moment. She is in my power, and I will use it to the utmost to protect her from that man."

"Proof!" cried Liftore sullenly. But Florimel gazed with pale dilated eyes in the face of the speaker. She knew his words were true. Her soul assured her of it.

"To my sister," answered Malcolm, "I will give all the proof she may please to require; to Lord Liftore I will not even repeat my assertion. To him I will give no shadow of proof. I will but cast him out of my house. Stoat, order horses for Lady Bellair."

"Gien ye please, sir, my Lord," replied Stoat, "the Lossie Airms horses is ordered a'ready for Lady Clementina."

"Will my Lady Clementina oblige me by yielding her horses to Lady Bellair?" said Malcolm, turning to her.

"Certainly, my lord," answered Clementina.

"You, I trust, my lady," said Malcolm, "will stay a little longer with my sister."

Lady Bellair came up.

"My lord," she said, "is this the marquis or the fisherman's way of treating a lady?"

"Neither. But do not drive me to give the rein to my tongue. Let it be enough to say that my house shall never be what your presence would make it."

He turned to the fishermen.

"Three of you take that lord to the town gate, and leave him on the other side of it. His servant shall follow as soon as the horses come."

"I will go with you," said Florimel, crossing to Lady Bellair.

Malcolm took her by the arm. For one moment she struggled, but finding no one dared interfere, submitted, and was led from the room like a naughty child.

"Keep my lord there till I return," he said as he went.

He led her into the room which had been her mother's boudoir, and when he had shut the door,

"Florimel," he said, "I have striven to serve you the best way I knew. Your father, when he confessed me his heir, begged me to be good to you, and I promised him. Would I have given all these months of my life to the poor labour of a groom, allowed my people to be wronged and oppressed, my grandfather to be a wanderer, and my best friend to sit with his lips of wisdom sealed, but for your sake? I can hardly say it was for my father's sake, for I should have done the same had he never said a word about you. Florimel, I loved my sister, and longed for her goodness. But she has foiled all my endeavours. She has not loved or followed the truth. She has been proud and disdainful, and careless of right. Yourself young and pure, and naturally recoiling from evil, you have yet cast from you the devotion of a noble, gifted, large-hearted, and great-souled man, for the miserable preference of the smallest, meanest, vilest of men. Nor that only! for with him you have sided against the woman he most bitterly wrongs: and therein you wrong the nature and the God of women. Once more, I pray you to give up this man; to let your true self speak and send him away."

"Sir, I go with my Lady Bellair, driven from her father's house by one who calls himself my brother. My lawyer shall make inquiries."

She would have left the room, but he intercepted her.

"Florimel," he said, "you are casting the pearl of your womanhood before a swine. He will trample it under his feet and turn again and rend you. He will treat you worse still than poor Lizzy, whom he troubles no more with his presence."

He had again taken her arm in his great grasp.

"Let me go. You are brutal. I shall scream."

"You shall not go until you have heard all the truth."

"What! more truth still? Your truth is anything but pleasant."

"It is more unpleasant yet than you surmise. Florimel, you have driven me to it. I would have prepared you a shield against the shock which must come, but you compel me to wound you to the quick. I would have had you receive the bitter truth from lips you loved, but you drove those lips of honour from you, and now there are left to utter it only the lips you hate, yet the truth you shall receive: it may help to save you from weakness, arrogance, and falsehood.—Sister, your mother was never Lady Lossie."

"You lie. I know you lie. Because you wrong me, you would brand me with dishonour, to take from me as well the sympathy of the world. But I defy you."

"Alas! there is no help, sister. Your mother indeed passed as Lady Lossie, but my mother, the true Lady Lossie, was alive all the time, and in truth, died only last year. For twenty years my mother suffered for yours in the eye of the law. You are no better than the little child his father denied in your presence. Give that man his dismissal, or he will give you yours. Never doubt it. Refuse again, and I go from this room to publish in the next the fact that you are neither Lady Lossie nor Lady Florimel Colonsay. You have no right to any name but your mother's. You are Miss Gordon."

She gave a great gasp at the word, but bravely fought the horror that was taking possession of her. She stood with one hand on the back of a chair, her face white, her eyes starting, her mouth a little open and rigid—her whole appearance, except for the breath that came short and quick, that of one who had died in sore pain.

"All that is now left you," concluded Malcolm, "is the choice between sending Liftore away, and being abandoned by him. That choice you must now make."

The poor girl tried to speak, but could not. Her fire was burning out, her forced strength fast failing her.

"Florimel," said Malcolm, and knelt on one knee and took her hand. It gave a flutter as if it would fly like a bird; but the net of his love held it, and it lay passive and cold. "Florimel, I will be your true brother. I *am* your brother, your very own brother, to live for you, love you, fight for you, watch and ward you, till a true man takes you for his wife." Her hand quivered like a leaf. "Sister, when you and I appear before our father, I shall hold up my face before him: will you?"

"Send him away," she breathed rather than said, and sank on the floor. He lifted her, laid her on a couch, and returned to the drawing-room.

"My lady Clementina," he said, "will you oblige me by going to my sister in the room at the top of the stair?"

"I will, my lord," she answered, and went.

Malcolm walked up to Liftore.

"My lord," he said, "my sister takes leave of you."

"I must have my dismissal from her own lips."

"You shall have it from the hands of my fishermen. Take him away."

"You shall hear from me, my lord marquis, if such you be," said Liftore.

"Let it be of your repentance, then, my lord," said Malcolm. "That I shall be glad to hear of."

As he turned from him, he saw Caley gliding through the little group of servants towards the door. He walked after her, laid his hand on her shoulder, and whispered a word in her ear, she grew gray rather than white, and stood still.

Turning again to go to Florimel, he saw the fishermen stopped with their charge in the doorway by Mr Morrison and Mr Soutar, entering together.

"My lord! my lord!" said the lawyer, coming hastily up to him, "there can be surely no occasion for such—such—measures!"

Catching sight of Malcolm's wounded forehead, however, he supplemented the remark with a low exclamation of astonishment and dismay—the tone saying almost as clearly as words, "How ill and foolishly everything is managed without a lawyer!" Malcolm only smiled, and went up to the magistrate, whom he led into the middle of the room, saying,

"Mr Morrison, every one here knows you: tell them who I am."

"The Marquis of Lossie, my lord," answered Mr Morrison; "and from my heart I congratulate your people that at length you assume the rights and honours of your position."

A murmur of pleasure arose in response. Ere it ceased, Malcolm started and sprung to the door. There stood Lenorme! He seized him by the arm, and, without a word of explanation, hurried him to the room where his sister was. He called Clementina, drew her from the room, half pushed Lenorme in, and closed the door.

"Will you meet me on the sand-hill at sunset, my lady?" he said.

She smiled assent. He gave her the key of the tunnel, hinted that she might leave the two to themselves for awhile, and returned to his friends in the drawing-room.

Having begged them to excuse him for a little while, and desired Mrs Courthope to serve luncheon for them, he ran to his grandfather, dreading lest any other tongue than his own should yield him the opened secret. He was but just in time, for already the town was in a tumult, and the spreading ripples of the news were fast approaching Duncan's ears.

Malcolm found him, expectant and restless. When he disclosed himself, he manifested little astonishment, only took him in his arms and pressed him to his bosom, saying, "Ta Lort pe praised, my son! and she wouldn't pe at aal surprised." Then he broke out in a fervent ejaculation of Gaelic, during which he turned instinctively to his pipes, for through them lay the final and only sure escape for the prisoned waters of the overcharged reservoir of his feelings. While be played, Malcolm slipped out, and hurried to Miss Horn.

One word to her was enough. The stern old woman burst into tears, crying,

"Oh, my Grisel! my Grisel! Luik doon frae yer bonny hoose amo' the stars, an' see the braw laad left ahint ye, an' praise the lord 'at ye ha'e sic a son o' yer boady to come hame to ye whan a' 's ower."

She sobbed and wept for a while without restraint. Then suddenly she rose, dabbed her eyes indignantly, and cried,

"Hoot! I'm an auld fule. A body wad think I hed feelin's efter a'!"

Malcolm laughed, and she could not help joining him.

"Ye maun come the morn an' chise yer ain room i' the Hoose," he said.

"What mean ye by that, laddie?"

"At ye'll ha'e to come an' bide wi' me noo."

"Deed an' I s' du naething o' the kin', Ma'colm! H'ard ever onybody sic nonsense! What wad I du wi' Jean? An' I cudna thole men-fowk to wait upo' me. I wad be clean affrontit."

"Weel, weel! we'll see," said Malcolm.

On his way back to the House, he knocked at Mrs Catanach's door, and said a few words to her which had a remarkable effect on the expression of her plump countenance and deep-set black eyes.

When he reached home, he ran up the main staircase, knocked at the first door, opened it, and peeped in. There sat Lenorme on the couch, with Florimel on his knees, nestling her head against his shoulder, like a child that had been very naughty but was fully forgiven. Her face was blotted with her tears, and her hair was everywhere; but there was a light of dawning goodness all about her, such as had never shone in her atmosphere before. By what stormy-sweet process the fountain of this light had been unsealed, no one ever knew but themselves.

She did not move when Malcolm entered—more than just to bring the palms of her hands together, and look up in his face.

"Have you told him *all*, Florimel?" he asked.

"Yes, Malcolm," she answered. "Tell him again yourself."

"No, Florimel. Once is enough."

"I told him *all*," she said with a gasp; then gave a wild little cry, and, with subdued exultation, added, "and he *loves* me yet! He has taken the girl without a name to his heart!"

"No wonder," said Malcolm, "when she brought it with her."

"Yes," said Lenorme, "I but took the diamond casket that held my bliss, and now I could dare the angel Gabriel to match happinesses with me."

Poor Florimel, for all her worldly ways, was but a child. Bad associates had filled her with worldly maxims and words and thoughts and judgments. She had never loved Liftore, she had only taken delight in his flatteries. And now had come the shock of a terrible disclosure, whose significance she read in remembered looks and tones and behaviours of the world. Her insolence to Malcolm when she supposed his the nameless fate, had recoiled in lurid interpretation of her own. She was a pariah—without root, without descent, without fathers to whom to be gathered. She was nobody. From the courted and flattered and high-seated and powerful, she was a nobody! Then suddenly to this poor houseless, wind-beaten, rain-wet nobody, a house—no, a home she had once looked into with longing, had opened, and received her to its heart, that it might be fulfilled which was written of old, "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." Knowing herself a nobody, she now first began to be a somebody. She had been dreaming pleasant but bad dreams: she woke, and here was a lovely, unspeakably blessed and good reality, which had been waiting for her all the time on the threshold of her sleep! She was baptized into it with the tears of sorrow and shame. She had been a fool, but now she knew it, and was going to be wise.

"Will you come to your brother, Florimel?" said Malcolm tenderly, holding out his arms.

Lenorme raised her. She went softly to him, and laid herself on his bosom.

"Forgive me, brother," she said, and held up her face.

He kissed her forehead and lips, took her in his arms, and laid her again on Lenorme's knees.

"I give her to *you*," he said, "for you are good."

With that he left them, and sought Mr Morrison and Mr Soutar, who were waiting him over a glass of wine after their lunch. An hour of business followed, in which, amongst other matters, they talked about the needful arrangements for a dinner to his people, fishers and farmers and all.

After the gentlemen took their leave, nobody saw him for hours. Till sunset approached he remained alone, shut up in the Wizard's Chamber, the room in which he was born. Part of the time he occupied in writing to Mr Graham.

As the sun's orbed furnace fell behind the tumbling waters, Malcolm turned his face inland from the wet strip of shining shore on which he had been pacing, and ascended the sandhill. From the other side Clementina, but a moment later, ascended also. On the top they met, in the red light of the sunset. They clasped each the other's hand, and stood for a moment in silence.

"Ah, my lord!" said the lady, "how shall I thank you that you kept your secret from me! But my heart is sore to lose my fisherman."

"My lady," returned Malcolm, "you have not lost your fisherman; you have only found your groom."

And the sun went down, and the twilight came, and the night followed, and the world of sea and land and wind and vapour was around them, and the universe of stars and spaces over and under them, and eternity within them, and the heart of each for a chamber to the other, and God filling all—nay, nay—God's heart containing, infolding, cherishing all—saving all, from height to height of intensest being, by the bliss of that love whose absolute devotion could utter itself only in death.

## CHAPTER LXXI.

### THE ASSEMBLY.

**That** same evening, Duncan, in full dress, claymore and dirk at his sides, and carrying the great Lossie pipes, marched first through the streets of the upper, then through the closes of the lower town, followed by the bellman who had been appointed crier upon his disappearance. At the proper stations, Duncan blew a rousing pibroch, after which the bellman, who, for the dignity of his calling, insisted on a prelude of three strokes of his clapper, proclaimed aloud that Malcolm, Marquis of Lossie, desired the presence of each and every of his tenants in the royal burgh of Portlossie, Newton and Seaton, in the town-hall of the same, at seven of the clock upon the evening next following. The proclamation ended, the piper sounded one note three times, and they passed to the next station. When they had gone through the Seaton, they entered a carriage waiting for them at the sea-gate, and were driven to Scaurnose, and thence again to the several other villages on the coast belonging to the marquis, making at each in like manner the same announcement.

Portlossie was in a ferment of wonder, satisfaction, and pleasure. There were few in it who were not glad at the accession of Malcolm, and with every one of those few the cause lay in himself. In the shops, among the nets, in the curing-sheds, in the houses and cottages, nothing else was talked about; and stories and reminiscences innumerable were brought out, chiefly to prove that Malcolm had always appeared likely to turn out somebody, the narrator not seldom modestly hinting at a glimmering foresight on his own part of what had now been at length revealed to the world. His friends were jubilant as revellers. For Meg Partan, she ran from house to house like a maniac, laughing and crying. It was as if the whole Seaton had suddenly been translated. The men came crowding about Duncan, congratulating him and asking him a hundred questions. But the old man maintained a reticence whose dignity was strangely mingled of pomp and grace; sat calm and stately as feeling the glow of reflected honour; would not, by word, gesture, tone, or exclamation, confess to any surprise; behaved as if he had known it all the time; made no pretence however of having known it, merely treated the fact as not a whit more than might have been looked for by one who had known Malcolm as he had known him.

Davy, in his yacht uniform, was the next morning appointed the marquis's personal attendant, and a running time he had of it for a fortnight.

Almost the first thing that fell to him in his office was to show into the room on the ground floor where his master sat—the same in which for ages the lords of Lossie had been wont to transact what little business any of them ever attended to—a pale, feeble man, bowed by the weight of a huge brass-clasped volume under each arm. His lordship rose and met him with outstretched hand.

"I am glad indeed to see you, Mr Crathie," he said, "but I fear you are out too soon."

"I am quite well since yesterday, my lord," returned the factor, his face shining with pleasure. "Your lordship's accession has made a young man of me again. Here I am to render account of my stewardship."

"I want none, Mr Crathie—nothing, that is, beyond a summary statement of how things stand with me."

"I should like to satisfy your lordship that I have dealt honestly"—here the factor paused for a moment, then with an effort added—"by *you*, my lord."

"One word," said Malcolm, "—the last of the sort, I believe, that will ever pass between us. Thank God! we had made it up before yesterday.—If you have ever been hard upon any of my tenants, not to say unfair, you have wronged me infinitely more than if you had taken from me. God be with me as I prefer ruin to wrong. Remember, besides, that my tenants are my charge and care. For you, my representative, therefore, to do one of them an injury is to do me a double injury—to wrong my tenant, and to wrong him in my name."

"Ah, my lord! you don't know how they would take advantage of you, if there were nobody to look after your interests."

"Then do look after them, sir. It would be bad for them to succeed, as well as crippling to me. Only be sure, with the thought of the righteous God to elevate your sense of justice, that you are in the right. If doubtful, then give in.—And now, if any man thinks he has cause of complaint, I leave it to you, with the help of the new light that has been given you, to reconsider the matter, and, where needful, to make reparation. You must be the friend of my tenant as much as of his landlord. I have no interests inimical to those of my tenants. If any man comes to me with complaint, I will send him to restate his case to you, with the understanding that, if you will not listen to him, he is to come to me again, when I shall hear both sides and judge between. If after six months you should desire me to go over the books with you, I will do so. As to your loyalty to my family and its affairs, of that I never had a shadow of suspicion."

As he ended, Malcolm held out his hand. The factor's trembled in his strong grasp.

"Mistress Crathie is sorely vexed, my lord," he said, rising to take his leave, "at things both said and done in the dark."

Malcolm laughed.

"Give Mrs Crathie my compliments," he said, "and tell her a man is more than a marquis. If she will after this treat every honest fisherman as if he might possibly turn out a lord, she and I shall be more than quits."

The next morning he carried her again a few mackerel he had just caught, and she never forgot the lesson given her. That morning, I may mention, he did not go fishing alone, but had a lady with him in the dinghy; and indeed they were together in one place and another, the most of the day—at one time flying along the fields, she on the bay mare, and he on Kelpie.

When the evening came, the town-hall was crammed—men standing on all the window-sills; and so many could not get in that Malcolm proposed they should occupy the square in front. A fisherman in garb and gesture, not the less a gentleman and a marquis, he stood on the steps of the town-hall and spoke to his people. They received him with wild enthusiasm.

"The open air is better for everything," he began. "Fishers, I have called you first, because you are my own people. I am, and shall be a fisherman, after such fashion, I trust, as will content my old comrades. How things have come about, I shall not now tell you. Come all of you and dine with me, and you shall hear enough to satisfy at least lawful curiosity. At present my care is that you should understand the terms upon which it is possible for us to live together as friends. I make no allusion to personal friendships. A true friend is for ever a friend. And I venture to say my old friends know best both what I am and what I shall be. As to them I have no shadow of anxiety. But I would gladly be a friend to all, and will do my endeavour to that end.

"You of Portlossie shall have your harbour cleared without delay."

In justice to the fishers I here interrupt my report to state that the very next day they set about clearing the harbour themselves. It was their business—in part at least, they said, and they were ashamed of having left it so long. This did much towards starting well for a new order of things.

"You of Scaurnose shall hear the blasting necessary for your harbour commence within a fortnight; and every house shall ere long have a small piece of land at a reasonable rate allotted to it. But I feel bound to mention that there are some among you upon whom, until I see that they carry themselves differently, I must keep an eye. That they have shown themselves unfriendly to myself, in my attempts to persuade them to what they knew to be right, I shall endeavour to forget, but I give them warning that whoever shall hereafter disturb the peace or interfere with the liberty of my people, shall assuredly be cast out of my borders, and that as soon as the law will permit.

"I shall take measures that all complaints shall be heard, and all save foolish ones heeded; for, as much as in me lies, I will to execute justice and judgment and righteousness in the land. Whoever oppresses or wrongs his neighbour shall have to do with me. And to aid me in doing justice, I pray the help of every honest man. I have not been so long among you without having in some measure distinguished between the men who have heart and brain, and the men who have merely a sense of their own importance—which latter class unhappily, always takes itself for the former. I will deal with every man as I find him. I am set to rule, and rule I will. He who loves righteousness, will help me to rule; he who loves it not, shall be ruled, or depart."

The address had been every now and then interrupted by a hearty cheer; at this point the cheering was greatly prolonged; after it there was no more. For thus he went on:

"And now I am about to give you proof that I mean what I say, and that evil shall not come to the light without being noted and dealt with.

"There are in this company two women—my eyes are at this moment upon them where they stand together. One of them is already well-known to you all by sight: now you shall know, not what she looks, but what she is. Her name, or at least that by which she goes among you, is Barbara Catanach. The other is an Englishwoman of whom you know nothing. Her name is Caley."

All eyes were turned upon the two. Even Mrs Catanach was cowed by the consciousness of the universal stare, and a kind of numb thrill went through her from head to foot.

"Well assured that if I brought a criminal action against them, it would hang them both, I trust you will not imagine it revenge that moves me thus to expose them. In refraining from prosecuting them, I bind myself of necessity to see that they work no more evil. In giving them time for repentance, I take the consequences upon myself. I am bound to take care that they do not employ the respite in doing mischief to their neighbours. Without precaution I could not be justified in sparing them. Therefore those women shall not go forth to pass for harmless members of society, and see the life and honour of others lie bare to their secret attack. They shall live *here*, in this town, thoroughly known, and absolutely distrusted. And that they may thus be known and distrusted, I publicly declare that I hold proof against these women of having conspired to kill me. From the effects of the poison they succeeded in giving me, I fear I shall never altogether recover. I can prove also, to the extreme of circumstantial evidence, that there is the blood of one child at least upon the hands of each; and that there are mischiefs innumerable upon their lying tongues, it were an easy task to convince you. If I wrong them, let them accuse me; and whether they lose or gain their suit, I promise before you for witnesses, I will pay all; only thereby they will compel me to bring my actions for murder and conspiracy. Let them choose.

"Hear what I have determined concerning them. The woman Catanach shall take to her cottage the woman Caley. That cottage they shall have rent free: who could receive money from such hands? I will appoint them also a sufficiency for life and maintenance, bare indeed, for I would not have them comfortable. But they shall be free to work if they can find any to employ them. If, however, either shall go beyond the bounds I set, she shall be followed the moment she is missed, and that with a warrant for her apprehension. And I beg all honest people to keep an eye upon them. According as they live shall their life be. If they come to repentance, they will bless the day I reresolved upon such severe measures on their behalf. Let them go to their place."

I will not try to describe the devilish look, mingled of contempt and hate, that possessed the countenance of the midwife, as, with head erect, and eyes looking straight before her, she obeyed the command. Caley, white as death, trembled and tottered, nor dared once look up as she followed her companion to their appointed hell. Whether they made it pleasant for each other my reader may debate with himself. Before many months had gone by, stared at and shunned by all, even by Miss Horn's Jean, driven back upon her own memories, and the pictures that rose out of them, and deprived of every chance of indulging her dominant passion for mischievous influence, the midwife's face told such a different tale, that the schoolmaster began to cherish a feeble hope that within a few years Mrs Catanach might get so far as to begin to suspect she was a sinner—that she had actually done things she ought not to have done. One of those things that same night Malcolm heard from the lips of Duncan, a tale of horror and dismay. Not until then did he know, after all he knew concerning her, what the woman was capable of.

At his own entreaty, Duncan was formally recognized as piper to the Marquis of Lossie. His ambition reached no higher. Malcolm himself saw to his perfect equipment, heedful specially that his kilt and plaid should be of Duncan's own tartan of red and blue and green. His dirk and broadsword he had new sheathed, with silver mountings. A great silver brooch with a big cairngorm in the centre, took the place of the brass one, which henceforth was laid up among the precious things in the little armoury, and the badge of his clan in gold, with rubies and amethysts for the bells of the heather, glowed on his bonnet. And Malcolm's guests, as long as Duncan continued able to fill the bag, had to endure as best they might, between each course of every dinner without fail, two or three minutes of uproar and outcry from the treble throat of the powerful Lossie pipes. By his own desire, the piper had a chair and small table set for him behind and to the right of his chief, as he called him; there he ate with the family and guests, waited upon by Davy, part of whose business it was to hand him the pipes at the proper moment, whereupon he rose to his feet, for even he with all his experience and habitude was unable in a sitting posture to keep that stand of pipes full of wind, and raised such a storm of sound as made the windows tremble. A lady guest would now and then venture to hint that the custom was rather a trying one for English ears; but Clementina would never listen to a breath against Duncan's music. Her respect and affection for the old man were unbounded.

Malcolm was one of the few who understand the shelter of light, the protection to be gained against lying tongues by the discarding of needless reticence, and the open presentation of the truth. Many men who would not tell a lie, yet seem to have faith in concealment: they would rather not reveal the truth; darkness seems to offer them the cover of a friendly wing. But there is no veil like light—no adamantine armour against hurt like the truth. To Malcolm it was one of the promises of the kingdom that there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed. He was anxious, therefore, to tell his people, at the coming dinner, the main points of his story, and certain that such openness would also help to lay the foundation of confidence between him and his people. The one difficulty in the way was the position of Florimel. But that could not fail to appear in any case, and he was satisfied that even for her sake it was far better to speak openly; for then the common heart would take her in and cover her. He consulted, therefore, with Lenorme, who went to find her. She came, threw her arms round his neck and begged him to say whatever he thought best.

To add the final tinge to the rainbow of Malcolm's joy, on the morning of the dinner the schoolmaster arrived. It would be hard to say whether Malcolm or Clementina was the more delighted to see him. He said little with his tongue, but much with his eyes and face and presence.

This time the tables were not set in different parts of the grounds, but gathered upon the level of the drive and the adjacent lawny spaces between the house and the trees. Malcolm, in full highland dress as chief of his clan, took the head of the central table, with Florimel in the place of honour at his right hand, and Clementina on his left. Lenorme sat next to Florimel, and Annie Mair next to Lenorme. On the other side, Mr Graham sat next to Clementina, Miss Horn next to Mr Graham, and Blue Peter next to Miss Horn. Except Mr Morrison, he had asked none who were not his tenants or servants, or in some way connected with the estates, except indeed a few whom he counted old friends, amongst them some aged beggar-folk, waiting their summons to Abraham's bosom—in which there was no such exceptional virtue on the marquis's part, for, the poor law not having yet invaded Scotland, a man was not without the respect of his neighbours merely because he was a beggar. He set Mr Morrison to preside at the farmers' tables, and had all the fisher-folk about himself.

When the main part of the dinner was over, he rose, and with as much circumstance as he thought desirable, told his story, beginning with the parts in it his uncle and Mrs Catanach had taken. It was, however, he said, a principle in the history of the world, that evil should bring forth good, and his poor little cock-boat had been set adrift upon an ocean of blessing. For had he not been taken to the heart of one of the noblest and simplest of men, who had brought him up in honourable poverty and rectitude? When he had said this, he turned to Duncan, who sat at his own table behind him, with his pipe on a stool covered with a rich cloth by his side.

"You all know my grandfather," he went on, "and you all respect him."

At this rose a great shout.

"I thank you, my friends," he continued. "My desire is that every soul upon land of mine should carry himself to Duncan MacPhail as if he were in blood that which he is in deed and in truth, my grandfather."

A second great shout arose, which wavered and sank when they saw the old man bow his head upon his hands.

He went on to speak of the privileges he alone of all his race had ever enjoyed—the privileges of toil and danger, with all their experiences of human dependence and divine aid; the privilege of the confidence and companionship of honourable labouring men, and the understanding of their ways and thoughts and feelings; and, above all, the privilege of the friendship and instruction of the schoolmaster, to whom he owed more than eternity could reveal.

Then he turned again to his narrative, and told how his father, falsely informed that his wife and child were dead, married Florimel's mother; how his mother, out of compassion for both of them, held her peace; how for twenty years she had lived with her cousin Miss Horn, and held her peace even from her; how at last, when, having succeeded to the property, she heard he was coming to the House, the thought of his nearness yet unapproachableness—in this way at least he, the child of both, interpreted the result—so worked upon a worn and enfeebled frame, that she died.

Then he told how Miss Horn, after his mother's death, came upon letters revealing the secret which she had all along known must exist, but after which, from love and respect for her cousin, she had never inquired.

Last of all he told how, in a paroxysm of rage, Mrs Catanach had let the secret of his birth escape her; how she had afterwards made affidavit concerning it; and how his father had upon his death-bed, with all necessary legal observances, acknowledged him his son and heir.

"And now, to the mighty gladness of my soul," he said, looking on Florimel at his side, "my dearly loved and honoured sister, loved and honoured long before I knew she was my own, has accepted me as her brother, and I do not think she greatly regrets the loss of the headship of the house which she has passed over to me. She will lose little else. And of all women it may well be to her a small matter to lose a mere title, seeing she is so soon to change her name for one who will bring her honour of a more enduring reality. For he who is about to become her husband is not only one of the noblest of men, but a man of genius whose praises she will hear on all sides. One of his works, the labour and gift of love, you shall see when we rise from the table. It is a portrait of your late landlord, my father, painted partly from a miniature, partly from my sister, partly from the portraits of the family, and partly, I am happy to think, from myself. You must yourselves judge of the truth of it. And you will remember that Mr Lenorme never saw my father. I say this, not to excuse, but to enhance his work.

"My tenants, I will do my best to give you fair play. My friend and factor, Mr Crathie, has confided to me his doubts whether he may not have been a little hard: he is prepared to reconsider some of your cases. Do not imagine that I am going to be a careless man of business. I want money, for I have enough to do with it, if only to set right much that is wrong. But let God judge between you and me.

"My fishermen, every honest man of you is my friend, and you shall know it. Between you and me that is enough. But for the sake of harmony, and right, and order, and that I may keep near you, I shall appoint three men of yourselves in each village, to whom any man or woman may go with request or complaint. If two of those three men judge the matter fit to refer to me, the probability is that I shall see it as they do. If any man think them scant of justice towards him, let him come to me. Should I find myself in doubt, I have here at my side my beloved and honoured master to whom to apply for counsel, knowing that what oracle he may utter I shall receive straight from the innermost parts of a temple of the Holy Ghost. Friends, if we be honest with ourselves, we shall be honest with each other.

"And, in conclusion, why should you hear from any lips but my own, that this lady beside me, the daughter of an English earl of ancient house, has honoured the house of Lossie by consenting to become its marchioness? Lady Clementina Thornicroft possesses large estates in the south of England, but not for them did I seek her favour—as you will be convinced when you reflect what the fact involves which she has herself desired me to make known to you—namely, that it was while yet she was unacquainted with my birth and position, and had never dreamed that I was other than only a fisherman and a groom, that she accepted me for her husband.—I thank my God."

With that he took his seat, and after hearty cheering, a glass or two of wine, and several speeches, all rose, and went to look at the portrait of the late marquis.

## CHAPTER LXXII.

### KNOTTED STRANDS.

LADY CLEMENTINA had to return to England to see her lawyers, and arrange her affairs. Before she went, she would gladly have gone with Malcolm over every spot where had passed any portion of his history, and at each heard its own chapter or paragraph; but Malcolm obstinately refused to begin such a narration before Clementina was mistress of the region to which it mainly belonged. After that, he said, he would, even more gladly, he believed, than she, occupy all the time that could be spared from the duties of the present in piecing together the broken reflections of the past in the pools of memory, until they had lived both their lives over again together, from earliest recollection to the time when the two streams flowed into one, thenceforth to mingle more and more inwardly to endless ages.

So the Psyche was launched. Lady Clementina, Florimel, and Lenorme were the passengers, and Malcolm, Blue Peter, and Davy the crew. There was no room for servants, yet was there no lack of service. They had rough weather a part of the time, and neither Clementina nor Lenorme was altogether comfortable, but they made a rapid voyage, and were all well when they landed at Greenwich.

Knowing nothing of Lady Bellair's proceedings, they sent Davy to reconnoitre in Portland Place. He brought back word that there was no one in the house but an old woman. So Malcolm took Florimel there. Everything belonging to their late visitors had vanished, and nobody knew where they had gone.

Searching the drawers and cabinets, Malcolm, to his unspeakable delight, found a miniature of his mother, along with one of his father—a younger likeness than he had yet seen. Also he found a few letters of his mother—mostly mere notes in pencil; but neither these nor those of his father which Miss Horn had given him, would he read: "What right has life over the secrets of death?" he said. "Or rather, what right have we who sleep over the secrets of those who have waked from their sleep and left the fragments of their dreams behind them?" Lovingly he laid them together, and burned them to dust flakes.

"My mother shall tell me what she pleases, when I find her," he said. "She shall not reprove me for reading her letters to my father."

They were married at Wastbeach, both couples in the same ceremony. Immediately after the wedding, the painter and his bride set out for Rome, and the marquis and marchioness went on board the Psyche. For nothing would content Clementina, troubled at the experience of her first voyage, but she must get herself accustomed to the sea, as became the wife of a fisherman; therefore in no way would she journey but on board the Psyche; and as it was the desire of each to begin their married life at home, they sailed direct for Portlossie. After a good voyage, however, they landed, in order to reach home quietly, at Duff Harbour, took horses from there, and arrived at Lossie House late in the evening.

Malcolm had written to the housekeeper to prepare for them the Wizard's Chamber, but to alter nothing on walls or in furniture. That room, he had resolved, should be the first he occupied with his bride. Mrs Courthope was scandalized at the idea of taking an earl's daughter to sleep in the garret, not to mention that the room had for centuries had an ill name; but she had no choice, and therefore contented herself with doing all that lay in the power of woman, under such severe restrictions, to make the dingy old room cheerful.

Alone at length in their somewhat strange quarters, concerning which Malcolm had merely told her that the room was that in which he was born—what place fitter, thought Clementina, wherein to commence the long and wonderful story she hungered to hear. Malcolm would still have delayed it, but she asked question upon question till she had him fairly afloat. He had not gone far, however, before he had to make mention of the stair in the wall, which led from the place where they sat, straight from the house.

"Can there be such a stair in this room?" she asked in surpise.

He rose, took a candle, opened a door, then another, and showed her the first of the steps down which the midwife had carried him, and descending which, twenty years after, his father had come by his death.

"Let us go down," said Clementina.

"Are you not afraid? Look," said Malcolm.

"Afraid, and you with me!" she exclaimed.

"But it is dark and the steps are broken."

"If it led to Hades, I would go with my fisherman. The only horror would be to be left behind."

"Come then," said Malcolm, "only you must be very careful."

He laid a shawl on her shoulders, and down they went, Malcolm a few steps in front, holding a candle to every step for her, many being broken.

They came at length where the stair ceased in ruin. He leaped down; she stooped, put her hands on his shoulder, and dropped into his arms. Then over the fallen rubbish, out by the groaning door, they went into the moonlight.

Clementina was merry as a child. All was so safe and peaceful with her fisherman! She would not hear of returning. They must have a walk in the moonlight first! So down the steps and the winding path into the valley of the burn, and up to the flower-garden they wandered, Clementina telling him how sick the moonlight had made her feel that night she met him first on the Boar's Tail, when his words concerning her revived the conviction that he loved Florimel. At the great stone basin Malcolm set the swan spouting, but the sweet musical jargon of the falling water seemed almost coarse in the soundless diapason of the moonlight. So he stopped it again, and they strolled farther up the garden.

Clementina venturing to remind him of the sexton-like gardener's story of the lady and the hermit's cave, which because of its Scotch, she was unable to follow, Malcolm told her now what John Jack had narrated, adding that the lady was his own mother, and that from the gardener's tale he learned that morning at length how to account for the horror which had seized him on his first entering the cave, as also for his father's peculiar carriage on that occasion: doubtless he then caught a likeness in him to his mother. He then recounted the occurrence circumstantially.

"I have ever since felt ashamed of the weakness," he concluded: "but at this moment I believe I could walk in with perfect coolness."

"We won't try it to-night," said Clementina, and once more turned him from the place, reverencing the shadow he had brought with him from the spirit of his mother.

They walked and sat and talked in the moonlight, for how long neither knew; and when the moon went behind the trees on the cliff, and the valley was left in darkness, but a darkness that seemed alive with the new day soon to be born, they sat yet, lost in a peaceful unveiling of hearts, till a sudden gust of wind roused Malcolm, and looking up he saw that the stars were clouded, and knew that the chill of the morning was drawing near.

He kept that chamber just as it was ever after, and often retired to it for meditation. He never restored the ruinous parts of the stair, and he kept the door at the top carefully closed. But he cleared out the rubbish that choked the place where the stair had led lower down, came upon it again in tolerable preservation a little beneath, and followed it into a passage that ran under the burn, appearing to lead in the direction of the cave behind the Baillies' Barn. Doubtless there was some foundation for the legend of Lord Gernon.

There, however, he abandoned the work, thinking of the possibility of a time when employment would be scarce, and his people in want of all he could give them. And when such a time arrived, as arrive it did before they had been two years married, a far more important undertaking was found needful to employ the many who must earn or starve. Then it was that Clementina had the desire of her heart, and began to lay out the money she had been saving for the purpose, in rebuilding the ancient Castle of Colonsay. Its vaults were emptied of rubbish and ruin, the rock faced afresh, walls and towers and battlements raised, until at last, when the loftiest tower seemed to have reached its height, it rose yet higher, and blossomed in radiance; for, topmost crown of all, there, flaming far into the northern night, shone a splendid beacon-lamp, to guide the fisherman when his way was hid.

Every summer for years, Florimel and her husband spent weeks in the castle, and many a study the painter made there of the ever-changing face of the sea.

Malcolm, as he well might, had such a strong feeling of the power for good of every high-souled schoolmaster, that nothing would serve him but Mr Graham must be reinstated. He told the presbytery that if it were not done, he would himself build a school-house for him, and the consequence, he said, needed no prediction. Finding, at the same time, that the young man they had put in his place was willing to act as his assistant, he proposed that he should keep the cottage, and all other emoluments of the office, on the sole condition that, when he found he could no longer conscientiously and heartily further the endeavours of Mr Graham, he should say so; whereupon the marquis would endeavour to procure him another appointment; and on these understandings the thing was arranged.

Mr Graham thenceforward lived in the House, a spiritual father to the whole family, reverenced by all, ever greeted with gladness, ever obeyed. The spiritual dignity and simplicity, the fine sense and delicate feeling of the man, rendered him a saving presence in the place; and Clementina felt as if one of the ancient prophets, blossomed into a Christian, was the glory of their family and house. Like a perfect daughter, she watched him, tried to discover preferences of which he might not himself be aware, and often waited upon him with her own hands.

There was an ancient building connected with the house, divided now for many years into barn and dairy, but evidently the chapel of the monastery: this Malcolm soon set about reconverting. It made a lovely chapel—too large for the household, but not too large for its congregation upon Wednesday evenings, when many of the fishermen and their families, and not a few of the inhabitants of the upper town, with occasionally several farm servants from the neighbourhood, assembled to listen devoutly to the fervent and loving expostulations and rousings, or the tender consolings and wise instructions of the *master*, as every one called him. The hold he had of their hearts was firm, and his influence on their consciences far reaching.

When there was need of conference, or ground for any wide expostulation, the marquis would call a meeting in the chapel; but this occurred very seldom. Now and then the master, sometimes the marquis himself, would use it for a course of lectures or a succession of readings from some specially interesting book; and in what had been the sacristy they gathered a small library for the use of the neighbourhood.

No meeting was held there of a Sunday, for although the clergyman was the one person to whom all his life the marquis never came any nearer, he was not the less careful to avoid everything that might rouse contention or encourage division. "I find the doing of the will of God," he would say, "leaves me no time for disputing about his plans—I do not say for thinking about them." Not therefore, however, would he waive the exercise of the inborn right of teaching, and anybody might come to the house and see the master on Sunday evenings. As to whether people went to church or stayed away, he never troubled himself in the least; and no more did the schoolmaster.

The chapel had not been long finished when he had an organ built in it. Lady Lossie played upon it. Almost every evening, at a certain hour, she played for a while; the door was always open, and any one who pleased might sit down and listen.

Gradually the feeling of the community, from the strengthening and concentrating influence of the House, began to bear upon offenders; and any whose conduct had become in the least flagrant soon felt that the general eye was upon them, and that gradually the human tide was falling from them, and leaving them prisoned in a rocky basin on a barren shore. But at the same time, all three of the powers at the House were watching to come in the moment there was a chance; and what with the marquis's warnings, his wife's encouragements, and the master's expostulations, there was no little hope of the final recovery of several who would otherwise most likely have sunk deeper and deeper.

The marchioness took Lizzy for her personal attendant, and had her boy much about her; so that by the time she had children of her own, she had some genuine and worthy notion of what a child was, and what could and ought to be done for the development of the divine germ that lay in the human egg; and had found that the best she could do for any child, or indeed anybody, was to be good herself.

Rose married a young fisherman, and made a brave wife and mother. To the end of her days she regarded the marquis almost as a being higher than human, an angel that had found and saved her.

Kelpie had a foal, and, apparently in consequence, grew so much more gentle that at length Malcolm consented that Clementina, who was an excellent horsewoman, should mount her. After a few attempts to unseat her, not of the most determined kind however, Kelpie, on her part, consented to carry her, and ever after seemed proud of having a mistress that could ride. Her foal turned out a magnificent horse. Malcolm did not allow him to do anything that could be called work before he was eight years old, and had the return at the other end, for when Goblin was thirty he rode him still, and to judge by appearances, might but for an accident have ridden him ten years more.

It was not long ere people began to remark that no one now ever heard the piper utter the name *Campbell.* An ill-bred youth once—it was well for him that Malcolm was not near—dared the evil word in his presence: a cloud swept across the old man's face, but he held his peace; and to the day of his death, which arrived in his ninety-first year, it never crossed his lips. He died with the Lossie pipes on his bed, Malcolm on one side of him, and Clementina on the other.

Some of my readers may care to know that Phemy and Davy were married, and made the quaintest, oldest-fashioned little couple, with hearts which king or beggar might equally have trusted.

Malcolm's relations with the fisher-folk, founded as they were in truth and open uprightness, were not in the least injured by his change of position. He made it a point to be always at home during the herring-fishing. Whatever might be going on in London, the marquis and marchioness, their family and household, were sure to leave in time for the commencement of that. Those who admired Malcolm, of whom there were not a few even in Vanity Fair, called him the fisher-king: the wags called him the king-fisher, and laughed at the oddity of his taste in preferring what he called his duty to the pleasures of the season. But the marquis found even the hen-pecked Partan a nobler and more elevating presence than any strutting platitude of Bond-street. And when he was at home, he was always about amongst the people. Almost every day he would look in at some door in the Seaton, and call out a salutation to the busy housewife—perhaps go in and sit down for a minute. Now he would be walking with this one, now talking with that—oftenest with Blue Peter; and sometimes both their wives would be with them, upon the shore, or in the grounds. Nor was there a family meal to which any one or all together of the six men whom he had set over the Seaton and Scaurnose would not have been welcomed by the marquis and his Clemency. The House was head and heart of the whole district.

A conventional visitor was certain to feel very shruggish at first sight of the terms on which the marquis was with "persons of that sort;" but often such a one came to allow that it was no great matter: the persons did not seem to presume unpleasantly, and, notwithstanding his atrocious training, the marquis was after all a very good sort of fellow—considering.

In the third year he launched a strange vessel. Her tonnage was two hundred, but she was built like a fishing-boat. She had great stowage forward and below: if there was a large take, boat after boat could empty its load into her, and go back and draw its nets again. But this was not the original design in her.

The after half of her deck was parted off with a light rope-rail, was kept as white as holystone could make it, and had a brass-railed bulwark. She was steered with a wheel, for more room; the top of the binnacle was made sloping, to serve as a lectern; there were seats all round the bulwarks; and she was called the Clemency.

For more than two years he had provided training for the fittest youths he could find amongst the fishers, and now he had a pretty good band playing on wind instruments, able to give back to God a shadow of his own music. The same formed the Clemency's crew. And every Sunday evening the great fishing-boat with the marquis, and almost always the marchioness on board, and the latter never without a child or children, led out from the harbour such of the boats as were going to spend the night on the water.

When they reached the ground, all the other boats gathered about the great boat, and the chief men came on board, and Malcolm stood up betwixt the wheel and the binnacle, and read—always from the gospel, and generally words of Jesus, and talked to them, striving earnestly to get the truth alive into their hearts. Then he would pray aloud to the living God, as one so living that they could not see him, so one with them that they could not behold him. When they rose from their knees, man after man dropped into his boat, and the fleet scattered wide over the waters to search them for their treasure.

Then the little ones were put to bed; and Malcolm and Clementina would sit on the deck, reading and talking, till the night fell, when they too went below, and slept in peace. But if ever a boat wanted help, or the slightest danger arose, the first thing was to call the marquis, and he was on deck in a moment.

In the morning, when a few of the boats had gathered, they would make for the harbour again, but now with full blast of praising trumpets and horns, the waves seeming to dance to the well-ordered noise divine. Or if the wind was contrary, or no wind blew, the lightest-laden of the boats would take the Clemency in tow, and, with frequent change of rowers, draw her softly back to the harbour.

For such Monday mornings, the marquis wrote a little song, and his Clemency made an air to it, and harmonized it for the band. Here is the last stanza of it:—

Like the fish that brought the coin,
We in ministry will join—
Bring what pleases thee the best;
Help from each to all the rest.

MACDONALD, GEORGE PR

4967.

The Marquis of Lossie .M3